

14 Texas
FOURTH EDITION.

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January 1, 1889.

No. 597.

\$2.50
a Year.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

Vol. XXIII



OR, THE BLACK BRAVOS.

A Romance of General Cook's Rocky
Mountain Man-Hunters.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

CHAPTER I.

RANGER'S REST.

A RANCH in the far Southwest, in the grand old State of Texas, the scene of so many wild adventures, of so much romance, that its history is full of facts for the novelist to base fiction upon.

A rude house, if compared with the dwellings of civilization, yet most comfortable withal, showing it to be the home of those who made the best of an isolated life,

"YOU HAVE FOUND HIM, MY YOUNG TEXAN, FOR I AM GENERAL DAVE COOK, CHIEF
OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN DETECTIVES."

There was a large cabin, with two rooms on each side of a wide open space, or hall, which could be boarded in in winter, and a broad, covered piazza encircled the house.

A small cabin in the rear served as a kitchen, and back in the timber were half a dozen huts, the homes of the cowboys belonging to the ranch.

There were fields of grain rudely fenced in, a vegetable garden, and spreading prairies for miles around the timbered hill upon which the ranch was situated, so that any foe could be seen approaching miles away.

Cattle and horses dotted the prairies, watched over by a dozen mounted cowboys, and a crystal stream wound around the base of the hill upon which the cabins were situated.

Within, the cabin was comfortably furnished, and the dwellers therein might be said to live a life of almost luxury there in their border home, far from the marts of busy life.

Such was the home of Colonel Dillon Dumont, a descendant of an old New York family of wealth, and who, discarded by the woman he had madly loved, had gone to Texas and cast his fortunes with the then struggling republic, fighting against Mexico.

In the Mexican war, the colonel had distinguished himself on many fields, and on one occasion, when taken prisoner, would have been put to death but for the fact that a beautiful young Mexican girl saved his life and aided his escape.

The war over, Colonel Dumont turned his attention to cattle-raising, and one day there passed his ranch a wagon-train of Mexican exiles, who had been forced to leave their country on account of their friendliness to the Americans.

In that train were Don Ramirez and his daughter, the Senorita Rita, to whom Colonel Dumont owed his life.

The Don was ill, and Colonel Dumont carried them at once to his ranch.

There the old Mexican steadily grew worse, until one day, some three months after his coming, he was laid to rest on the banks of the little stream that flowed near Ranger's Rest, as the colonel had called his ranch.

The ranchero had buried his first love in the grave of forgetfulness, and never could love again as he loved the woman who had cast him off, a few days before the one appointed for their wedding; but he owed to Senorita Rita his life, and her lovely face and form and her devotion to her father won his deepest sympathy and regard, while he knew that she loved him.

So he asked her to become his wife, and by the bedside of her dying father they were married, and never had Dillon Dumont regretted the day that he wedded the lovely Mexican girl.

A son was born to them, and in him the blended likeness of the father and mother, and the little Edgar became their idol.

But death robbed Ranger's Rest of its beautiful mistress when the boy had reached his fifteenth year, and the sorrowing husband and son laid her to rest in the quiet spot where her father was buried, on the banks of the running stream, whose waters sung by night and day a requiem to the dead.

An educated, accomplished woman, Mrs. Dumont had taught her son much that tended toward his refinement and culture in spite of his wild surroundings, while his father had constituted himself his tutor, and the youth thus received an excellent education, as far as books went, while the cowboys saw to it that his knowledge of prairie-craft, riding, hunting, shooting and Indian-fighting should not be neglected.

And so faithfully did the cowboys do their duty as tutors, that Edgar Dumont, when only in his sixteenth year, had no superior as a rider, dead-shot, Indian-trailer, and skill in prairie and mountain craft.

Tall and splendidly formed, with a face as marked for its good looks as its intelligence, daring and resolution, Edgar Dumont possessed a noble nature that would render him popular with all.

His mother's death had been a bitter grief for him to bear, and he never forgot her loving face, and each day sought her grave to recall her to mind as she was in life, and his father knew that a son who thus remembered his dead mother, could not go far wrong, whatever fate befell him.

With a fine ranch, a large herd of cattle, a comfortable home, and his son verging upon manhood, Colonel Dillon Dumont seemed content with life, if not happy.

He had wished Edgar to have an education above what he could teach him, and so had sent him to a military school in a Northern State,

and he was looking to his coming home for his first vacation with great pleasure, for word had come to him how his son stood at the head of his class, and had been promoted rapidly to the captaincy of one of the companies at the academy, an honor seldom won by a student his first year at college.

Seated in his home one night, enjoying his pipe and reading a letter from Edgar, which told him to look for him at any time, as he would purchase a horse and outfit at the nearest town to Ranger's Rest and ride over, Colonel Dumont started as the door cautiously opened and a stranger entered.

And more, the stranger was clad in deep black, wore a mask, and had the drop on the Texan ranchero.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLACK BRAVO.

COLONEL DUMONT was an utterly fearless man, but he had lived long enough on the border to understand that when a man had the drop on him there was but one thing to do.

That thing was to make no resistance, as it meant sure death.

The Mexicans had often raided the country round about Ranger's Rest, and the Comanche and other Indians had also driven off cattle, and played sad havoc with the herd of ponies, so that Colonel Dumont and his cowboys were ever on the alert to greet a foe.

But coming as did this unknown enemy, silently, unlooked for, and wearing a mask, Colonel Dumont had been taken at a disadvantage.

He had weapons in the room with him, and yet they were not within reach of his hand.

The stranger had silently entered the room, somehow missing the peon servants, half a dozen in number, who had come from Mexico with Don Ramirez and his daughter.

He was a man of fine physique, and dressed in a suit of entire black, pants and coat, the former tucked in cavalry boots, on the heels of which were massive spurs, that had the appearance of being solid gold.

His coat was buttoned close about his form, and a belt, with revolvers and knife, all gold mounted, encircled his waist.

His hat was a sable sombrero, encircled by a gold cord, and looped up on the left side with an ivory pin representing a death's head and cross-bones.

But for his weapons and slouch hat, he had a very clerical look; but at a glance did Colonel Dumont know him, though they had never met before.

The ranchero knew him as one of a band known as the Black Bravos, who had been for a couple of years the terror of the Rio Grande border, on both sides of the river.

He and his cowboys had had a fight with the Black Bravos, and one having been killed, was found to be dressed just as this one was, who now appeared before him, and their sable costume and evil deeds had won for them their name.

"Well, sir, you have the advantage, I admit, so let me know what you want with me," said the colonel, calmly.

"To kill you," was the response in a deep, determined voice, and yet one that, but for the threat would not have sounded unpleasantly to the ear.

"Had such been your purpose you would not have delayed thus long," was the cool reply.

"You mistake me, for as a cat loves to play with a mouse to torture it before killing it, I so desire to amuse myself with you, Dillon Dumont!"

"Ah! you know me?"

"Better than you suppose."

"Your voice has a familiar ring, I admit, but as you are afraid, or ashamed to show your face, I must remain in the dark as to who you are."

"We have met before."

"I begin to feel that we have."

"It was years ago."

"Ha! now I know that accursed voice with its sonorous ring, Gale Davenport," and Colonel Dumont sprung to his feet.

"Down! sit down!" roared the masked visitor, and he leveled the revolver, cocked, and with finger on trigger, directly at the ranchero.

Colonel Dumont obeyed in silence, but his face was livid now.

"As you know me I will remove my mask," and he drew the mask downward, catching it under his chin. The act revealed a face heavily bearded, while, removing his slouch hat masses of dark hair fell upon his broad shoulders.

"I know those eyes, Gale Davenport, though

you have greatly changed in the years that have passed since you stole from me the woman that should have been my wife."

"Liar! villain! you stole the woman I loved from me! How dare you accuse me of a crime which you were guilty of?"

The man glared at Colonel Dumont with venom in his eyes; but his gaze was met by one of equal hatred, though there was an expression of amazement on the face of the ranchero as he asked:

"Do you accuse me of the deed you were guilty of?"

"I accuse you of stealing from me Kate Kennerley, who would have otherwise been my wife."

Colonel Dumont for a moment seemed speechless; but, controlling the emotion that almost unnerved him, he said in a voice that quivered with the intensity of his feelings:

"Gale Davenport, I loved Kate Kennerley with all my heart and soul, and had every reason to believe that she loved me, and the day was set for our marriage. One week before that day, I received a letter from her telling me that she could not marry me, and breaking our engagement."

"I at once went to her house, but it was said that she was absent, and her father told me that you were to be her husband."

"I loved her, and in my despair I gave up my home, my family and all and came to Texas."

The Black Bravo laughed derisively, while he replied:

"You tell me this when you know that she secretly married you and came hither with you!"

"It is a lie!"

"Yet her grave is not three hundred yards from where you now sit, and your son, her child and yours, is now off at college?"

"It is a lie! I repeat it, a lie, for Kate Kennerley never became my wife. The one who lies in her grave on the banks of the brook, was my wife, yes; but she was a Mexican girl who saved my life, and she is the mother of my son."

"My God! can this be true, Dillon Dumont?"

"It is, so help me Heaven!"

"And you did not marry Kate Kennerley?"

"Never! but you did!"

"I swear that I did not. I loved her, yes, and I knew that she loved you, was, in fact, engaged to you; but I was supposed to be rich, and though all believed her father to be wealthy, he was poor."

"I wanted her money, her father wanted my money, so he urged his daughter to break with you and pledge herself to marry me."

"Unfortunately I could stave off no longer my creditors; the crash came and I fled, and I supposed, of course, you had made her your wife."

"You astound me, for I know that she broke with me to marry you, and so I departed, as I said, for Texas."

"Then she is still single?"

"Perhaps; who knows?"

"By Heaven! then she shall yet be my wife!" and the voice of the Bravo rung out like one giving a command.

CHAPTER III.

A DUEL BY A GRAVE.

AT the words of the Bravo Colonel Dumont sprung to his feet, and in spite of the menacing revolver stepped toward the outlaw.

But the Black Bravo sprung backward and cried:

"Hold! you are at my mercy, Dillon Dumont, so do not force me to kill an unarmed man."

"Let us talk this matter over."

"What is there to say more than has been said?"

"You swear that you did not wed Kate Kennerley?"

"I do."

"And I swear to you that I did not."

"Still I saw in the papers a notice of her marriage to you."

"It was so published, but it was untrue, for I was a fugitive at the time of the asserted marriage."

"A fugitive from what?"

"I told you that when I was believed to be rich, I had nothing."

"I had gambled heavily and to recover myself committed forgery."

"I was discovered before the paper was due, so I had to fly to escape prison."

"I believed that my marriage with Kate

Kennerley would save me, but her father was already a bankrupt, and so sought to catch me, for you had no money, I believe.

"I supposed that you had married her, and the fact of my name being in the marriage notice was a mistake, and I learned that her father had nothing.

"Now, as she loved you, and did not marry you, and did not become my wife either, I'll gamble heavily upon it that she is still unmarried, and, though she must now be verging along toward forty, I shall make her my wife.

"If she has married, why I'll make a widow of her and make her my wife anyhow, for I am no longer a poor man now, and she does not know about my forgery, as I learned only lately that my uncle paid the note I forged his name to, and so saved the honor of our family, and no one knows, except yourself, that Gale Davenport is the Black Bravo, Captain Brandt."

"I know, and do you think for one moment I will allow you to wed that lovely woman?"

"You know, yes, Dillon Dumont; but, as I said, you are at my mercy.

"Hold! let me tell you that I sent a man to inveigle your cowboys into a trap, and your home is now surrounded by a score of my Black Bravos, while you have only half a dozen peon slaves to depend upon, and half of these are women.

"But, bad as men say I am, Dillon Dumont, I am not one to kill an old friend mercilessly, so I have a proposition to make to you."

"Well, sir."

"You have won quite a name as a brave soldier and daring leader of rangers, so you must be an expert with the revolver, and so I challenge you to meet me in mortal combat."

"Gladly, when and where you will."

"Well, I appear only by night, for my deeds are deeds of darkness, and in daytime no one ever sees a Black Bravo abroad, as you have doubtless heard."

"I have heard so."

"Well, by dawn we must hunt a hiding-place, so what we do must be done to-night."

"Yes."

"It is bright moonlight, and we can adjourn to the brook, down by the grave of your Mexican wife."

"I am ready, I said."

"I will have to trust you, of course."

"In what way?"

"I will let you have a revolver, and, if you wanted, you might take me at a disadvantage."

"If I was lost to all sense of honor it might be so."

"I said I would trust you, and I will."

"But let me say that if you kill me, of course you are at liberty to go north and look up an old sweetheart."

"I will call my men, or at least one of them, and instruct him that he is to come to the grave in half an hour, and if he finds me there dead, he is to withdraw my Bravos and leave you unmolested."

"If I fall?"

"Why, in that event I shall claim your property as my own, and will go and marry our old sweetheart, Kate Kennerley."

"Villain! Heaven will nerve my arm to take your life, for you are a blot upon the earth!"

"It may be so, Dillon Dumont, but I take the chance, as you see."

"You are in earnest?"

"Certainly."

"I had no idea that you had that much honor left."

"Oh, yes; so get your favorite pistol, and let us no longer delay."

The ranchero hastily buckled on his belt of arms, and said:

"I am ready."

"Have you no desire to write some parting instructions?"

"No, for I believe I will be the one to kill you."

"As you please; so let us go."

They left the room together, the Black Bravo again tucking up his hair under his hat, and resuming his mask.

As they reached the grounds, a short distance from the cabin, Brandt, the Black Bravo, took from his belt a small whistle, and gave one sharp, shrill blast.

In a short while a man was seen approaching, mounted, and leading a riderless horse.

The horseman was dressed as his chief, in black, and wore a mask.

He halted near, and saluted as a soldier might have done.

The chief stepped toward him, said a few words in a low tone, and the man rode off at

a canter, still leading the riderless horse, which was splendidly caparisoned.

It was evidently the chief's steed.

The moon was at its full and shone as bright as day almost.

Down the path the two went, side by side, and neither uttering a word.

They descended the hill to the glen, and stood by the graves of the Mexican wife and her father.

A stream of moonlight came through the trees just then and illumined the spot so that all was brightly visible.

"Step off the paces, please, Colonel Dumont," said the Black Bravo.

This the ranchero did, and the spots were marked at either end.

"We are to stand back to back, count together each step, and at five wheel and fire," said the chief.

"That suits me, sir, and if your twinge of honor does not fail you, it will be as fair for me as for you."

"You doubt me, I see; but I will play fair."

"Are you ready?"

"I am."

Colonel Dumont took his stand, facing the grave of his wife, and his five steps would bring him to it.

The chief also took his position, and back to back the two stood.

At the word "one" the Black Bravo and the ranchero stepped off to march the five fatal steps, and as they turned there came the sharp report of a rifle from the hillside, and Colonel Dumont sunk in his tracks.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURN.

ACROSS the moonlit prairie a horseman was riding, following no defined trail, yet going forward as unerringly as though in no doubt about his way.

He was well mounted, though his horse seemed fatigued from a long ride, and his equipments were of the best, for the moon shone with unclouded brilliancy and revealed all with distinctness.

He was a youth of seventeen, perhaps, yet had the form and face of a man, so appeared older, and a fatigue uniform that he wore fitted his fine figure to perfection.

A belt encircled his waist, and at his back swung a repeating rifle.

It was about the hour of midnight, and he was heading toward a distant hill that rose above the surrounding prairie, and half around which ran a stream of water that glistened like silver in the moonlight.

Suddenly he drew rein, for from the distant hill there flashed up a red flame.

"What can it mean?" broke from the lips of the youth.

But he was not left long in doubt, for again the red flame shot upward and did not disappear.

"The cabin is on fire!" he fairly shouted, and he urged his horse into a rapid gallop.

Then, here, there upon the wooded hill, shot up other flames, until half a dozen were visible.

"That is no accidental fire, but the work of red-skins or Mexican raiders," he cried, as he urged his tired horse into a run.

He was yet miles away, and he felt that his horse, though willing, after a hard ride of two days could not stand the pace he kept him at.

Then, too, he realized that the red work of the raiders, or red-skins, was already accomplished, and if the ranchero, his cowboys and the servants could not whip off the enemy it would be madness for him to attempt to do so single-handed.

The horseman was Edgar Dumont, the Young Texan, returning to his home after a year at the Military Academy in the North.

He had anticipated a delightful vacation with his father, hunting, fishing and enjoying the wild life he loved so well.

He came in sight of Ranger's Rest to find it in flames.

Most men of his fearless nature would have dashed right on, reckless of consequences: but his early training had taught him with his courage, that caution also wins, and if the raiders had destroyed his home, then to dash in upon them would be to sacrifice his own life and thus prevent future work to avenge.

So, after reaching within a mile of the ranch, he drew his horse down to a halt, moved his repeating rifle around ready for use, saw that his revolvers were within easy grasp, and then rode on more cautiously, approaching not by the regular trail that he had crossed, but lead-

ing to the right to gain the cover of the timber at another point, where he would not be likely to run upon a sentinel of the enemy.

He saw that the main cabin, his home, the kitchen and servants' quarters, the cowboys' cabins and all had been set on fire.

The timber shielded them in part from his view, but he knew the location of each so well he was aware that not a building had been spared.

What fate had been his father's he could only guess, but he hoped that he was absent, and had thus escaped, for he felt sure that the raiders were in large force to accomplish what they had.

Not a cowboy had he met, and the cattle wont to be upon the prairie were nowhere visible, and this also led him to think that something had called his father and the men away from home.

At length he reached the stream, rode across and was in the timber on the sloping hillside.

No sound, save the crackling of the flames, came to his ears.

All was silent as the grave, so that he rode slowly around the base of the hill.

He well knew that he must soon come upon a spot sacred to him, for there, but a short distance away, was his mother's grave.

The light from the still burning cabins gave a red glare through the timber, but he was sure that the raiders had finished their work and gone, or else he would hear their voices.

Soon he came to a halt and dismounted.

His faithful horse stood awaiting, panting with his hard run, while his rider went forward.

There before him, just in the shadow, shielded from the moonlight by the trees, and from the red glare of the burning cabins by the hill, was his mother's grave.

But he halted quickly and an exclamation broke from his lips, as he beheld a dark form lying half across it, the head resting upon the mound.

Then he sprang forward and dropped upon his knees by the side of the form.

For the moment the one beneath the sod was forgotten, while from the lips of Edgar Dumont, broke the cry in a tone of bitterest anguish:

"My father! Yes, and murdered here!"

The young Texan had returned to find himself an orphan, homeless and alone in the world.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE TRACK.

IT was a long time before Edgar Dumont could regain his self-control.

His personal danger and all else were forgotten, for he knelt by the side of his dead father, and there, within a few feet of him, was the grave of his mother.

At last the youth gained control of himself and rose to his feet.

He observed that his father had a wound in the back of his head.

Had he been followed to the grave and slain there?

All his thoughts were in a chaos, and for some time he could not collect himself sufficiently to act.

Then he fastened his horse and went on foot up the path to the top of the hill.

His rifle was ready for use, and his face was set with a look of resolve that boded no good to any one whom he might meet.

But he saw no one, and the large cabin was still burning brightly so as to shed a light all around.

The other cabins, the smaller ones, gave a glow about them that gave him a view of the entire summit of the hill.

But not a human being was visible.

From tree to tree he made his way until at last he stood near the cabin, as near as the heat would allow him to approach.

The flower-garden his mother had planted was destroyed, and that the house had been sacked, there was evidence upon every side, for broken furniture and many things that could not be carried off, lay about broken and destroyed.

From the cabin the youth made his way to the burning home of the servants, and there a sad sight met his eyes, for there lay the bodies of the slain peons who had been so faithful to his parents and to him.

A groan fell upon his ears, and he sprang to the side of an old peon who lay against a tree which half supported him.

"Merida, speak to me! I am Senor Edgar."

He bent over the old man, whose eyes slowly opened, and the lips parting the words came with an effort:

"You are the Senor Edgar, and you have grown to be such a man."

"But oh, señor! death and destruction alone greet you here."

"What does it all mean, Merida, for my father is dead, and you, and the others are—"

"All gone but me, señor, and I am dying."

"But I may be able to save you, Merida."

"No, no, señor, do not move me, for I am shot through and through, and all will soon be over with me."

The truth of this Edgar Dumont at once realized, and, anxious to get all the information he could as to the perpetrators of the fiendish crime against him, he asked:

"But, Merida, are all your people dead?"

"Yes, señor, all, men and women too, all six of us."

"And the cowboys?"

"Were led off under false orders, Señor Edgar, and your father was thus entrapped and I heard the chief say he was dead."

"Who was the chief?"

"I heard the men call him Captain Brandt."

"Ha! the Black Bravos did this deed then?"

"Yes, Señor Edgar, they came to-night, surrounded our cabin and held us prisoners for a long time."

"Then I heard a pistol-shot, it seemed, and soon after the chief rode up to the door and told his men that he had killed the colonel, so to set to work and let none of us live to tell the tale, and to be in a hurry, as he wished to get the plunder and be far away before dawn."

"They shot us down, señor, shot us down as though we had been mad-dogs and I ran out and fell here, and they believed me dead, so left me."

"There were a number of them, señor, all dressed in black, and wearing marks, and they rode black horses too, for by the burning cabins I saw them distinctly."

"They loaded the ranch horses with plunder, set the cabins on fire and rode away to the northward, and I heard the chief say:

"Now for New Mexico, men, for this night's work will make Texas too hot for us."

The peon had spoken in a low, labored voice, gasping between many words, and he seemed to be growing weaker and weaker."

"To New Mexico?" said Edgar Dumont, more as though repeating the peon's words, than asking the question."

"Yes, señor."

"They can sell the cattle and plunder there, they know."

"Well, I have no home now, nothing left to me but misery," was the sad remark."

Suddenly the dying Mexican raised himself on his elbow, and said in a deep, quivering voice:

"You have revenge, señor!" and with these words, the peon fell back dead."

"Yes, I have revenge, and I will seek it, for the man who has done this deed I will track to death!" and the voice of the young Texan rung out clear and firm."

He felt no fear for himself then, for the enemy had gone, and so he walked back to where he had left his worn-out horse, and taking the saddle and bridle off, staked him out to feed and rest."

Then he paced to and fro by the side of his dead father until the dawn broke, for there was no rest for him."

At last the gray of morning was visible in the east, and the youth, faint with hunger, cooked his breakfast from his store on his saddle, and then set to work to bury the dead."

A spade and shovel were found, and a grave dug for his father by the side of his mother, and the body was laid to rest."

Then the bodies of the peons were buried on the bank of the stream, and as it was now sunset, the young Texan ate his supper and threw himself down to sleep, utterly worn out with want of rest and his hard task."

For several days he camped about the ruins of his home, hoping for the return of the cowboys, for to the nearest ranch was half a day's journey, and he did not wish to leave the spot, fearing some one might come."

He had found his father's splendid horse strolling about with saddle and bridle on, as though he had escaped from his captor."

Then he found a number of useful articles scattered about, more provisions, bedding, and a belt of revolvers with a repeating rifle, which had been his father's."

He remembered that beneath the hearth in the sitting-room there was a vault, or safe, where his father had kept his money, so he dug away the ashes, opened the place, and found himself the possessor of something over a thousand dollars in gold, with a leather case of papers yellowed by time."

Using his own horse for a pack animal, Edgar Dumont mounted the one he had caught, and the fourth morning after his arrival, started on the trail of the raiders."

"I will find that man, Brandt, if I have to track him to the ends of the earth," he said, aloud, as he struck the broad trail left by the Black Bravos."

CHAPTER VI.

AN AMBUSCADE.

A HORSEMAN was climbing up a steep mountain trail in Colorado, several months after the burning of the Ranger's Rest Ranch, and behind him followed a pack-horse, which showed that he was on a long trip."

The horseman dismounted at a steeper place than usual, and led his horse on up to the top of the ridge."

He was about to remount and continue on his way, when he beheld, on the other side of the ridge, something that riveted his attention."

What he saw was two men going along in a crouching position, toward a group of rocks which stood at one side of a trail running up the valley."

The men had hitched their horses back in a thicket, and the animals were also visible to the one on the ridge."

The attitude and movements of the two men indicated that they were trying to head off some kind of game."

And the game they sought was also visible, and it was human game, too."

A horseman was riding up the valley, following the trail that led by the group of rocks, behind which the two men had ambushed themselves."

The horseman was clad in a miner's garb, sat his horse well, was armed with a belt in which were two revolvers, and wore a broad-brimmed sombrero."

His form was wiry, indicating strength and activity, and his face strongly stamped with intelligence, resolution, and fearlessness, and yet which did not mar the expression of kindness in his countenance."

He was all unconscious of danger ahead, and rode along at a rapid walk, his splendid horse seeming to care nothing for the weight he bore."

Nearer and nearer the horseman drew to the ambush laid for him, not even the instinct of his horse scenting danger."

The two men arrived panting at the rocks, after a sharp run, having evidently scented their prey afar off, and determined to reach the point where they could strike a deadly blow."

They crouched down not far apart among the rocks, wholly sheltered from the view of the coming horseman, until he should ride almost upon them, and yet within sight of each other."

They got their rifles ready, and said a few words in a low tone, when they were ready to kill the victim riding all unconsciously upon his fate."

Nearer and nearer he rode to the rocks, and another moment would have ended his life when suddenly came the stern command:

"Hands up! or you are dead men!"

The two would-be assassins turned quickly, one to fire upon this unexpected foe; but a revolver flashed a second before his own, which exploded from the convulsive clutch of death upon the trigger, for a bullet had entered his forehead!"

As though sure of his aim the revolver of the dead-shot was now leveled at the other man in ambush, and sharply came the words:

"Surrender, or die!"

"I cave, pard!" was the reply, and the ambusher's hands went up quickly."

Not six seconds had transpired in this action, so rapid had been the movements of all, and, as the man's hands went above his head, the horseman spurred into full view."

The picture presented to his gaze was a thrilling one."

There lay one of the men who had been lying in ambush for him, and the mark in his forehead showed where the bullet had entered that cost him his life."

Not ten feet away stood his pard, a villainous-faced fellow, with his hands held above his head, a rifle at his feet, where he had dropped it, and with two revolvers in his belt."

A few paces from him stood a beardless youth, tall, handsome, cool and determined, and with his revolver covering the intended assassin's head."

"Well, gentlemen, a lively picture this, I must say. What is it all about?" demanded the horseman with grim humor at the situation."

"I was on the ridge, sir, and beheld these two men leave their horses back yonder and

run to these rocks, as though to head you off, for I saw you coming along the trail."

"I slipped down the hill and headed them off in their little game; that is all, sir," was the cool reply of Edgar Dumont, for he it was."

"You are a cool one, for a youngster, and you have saved my life, my friend, for these fellows I recognize now, and they have vowed a dozen times to kill me."

"They have tried it before, but this time would have called in my checks sure, but for you, as I suspected no danger here. Your name, please."

"Edgar Dumont."

"Where from?"

"Texas."

"Ah! which trail are you following?"

"To find General Dave Cook, Chief of the Rocky Mountain Secret Service Men."

"You have found him, my young Texan, for I am General Dave Cook, Chief of the Rocky Mountain Detectives," was the reply of the horseman."

"You are General Cook?" cried the youth in amazement, and with an expression of pleasure crossing his face."

"Yes, my young pard, and your attached friend, permit me to add, for I again say I owe you my life, as well I know these two fellows, one of whom you have saved from the gallows; but this one will not be so fortunate," and turning to the prisoner the detective chief had the irons upon him in an instant."

"Shall I relieve you of him, sir, or will you accompany me to my camp, where, it is needless to say, you will be welcome?" the general asked."

"I was going to seek you, sir, for I have important work to do and needed your aid."

"You shall have it, so come with me to camp."

"The horses of these men are up the valley, sir, a quarter of a mile, and I left mine yonder on the ridge."

"Well, we will go for the horses," and placing the body of the dead man on the detective general's horse the party set off to where the desperadoes had hitched their animals when they had run to head off the lone rider."

The horses were found, the body was strapped to one, the prisoner mounted the other, and the general and Edgar Dumont walked up the ridge, the faithful animal of the chief following."

There Edgar Dumont's horses were found, and mounting, all set off for the camp of the Rocky Mountain Detectives, a band of Secret Service men who were a terror to evil-doers upon the frontier, and which under General Cook, had won deserved fame as daring hunters of desperadoes."

CHAPTER VII.

BORDER DETECTIVES.

THE camp of the Rocky Mountain Detectives was situated in a picturesque canyon in the heart of a range of mountains."

It looked like a camp to stay, for it was most comfortable in every respect, and a more delightful spot to dwell in could hardly have been found upon the border."

But appearances were deceiving as far as the frontier home of Dave Cook was concerned, for when he was considered permanently settled for months, the following day no trace of his men could be seen, for, with their equipage, horses and all, they had flown, disappearing in the night most mysteriously."

Thus no one knew just where to find Dave Cook's detectives."

For weeks they were encamped in the mountains, then on the plains, and for a month or more no one seemed to see one of them."

In the mining-camps and border towns they also dwelt at times; but just where to look for the mysterious Secret Service chief and his men no one could tell."

This rendered them the more to be dreaded, and the outlaws of the mining-camps and prairies had to keep a close watch upon their foes, for fear of being caught and dealt with in a manner that was an example to lawless men in general."

It was just after twilight when General Dave Cook and those with him entered the canyon, and soon after the detective's camp came into view."

"You do not keep guards on post?" said Edgar Dumont, in surprise."

"Oh, yes, but you did not see them, though I did, and answered a signal given me by a sentinel a mile back," was the reply of the general."

"And you permit this man to know the way to your camp?"

"Yes."

"Suppose he escapes, and you say he belongs to a band of outlaws?"

"He'll not escape," was the significant response.

And then the chief continued:

"I will tell you why."

"This man was once a member of my band, and I found he was playing me false, for he was taking money from outlaws to let them alone, and his companion, a go-between, was the man you killed."

"I had the fellow arrested, and his trial followed, but he escaped, and in doing so killed the guard, and he vowed to kill me, and so joined the band of outlaws known as the Black Bravos."

"The Black Bravos!" cried Edgar Dumont, eagerly.

"Yes; a band of outlaws that were driven out of Texas, and so came to Colorado to raid upon the miners."

"This man and one other were their spies; the other you rid the country of, and this man will soon hang for his crimes, for I shall turn him over to the miners in Gold Dust City, as they have a justice of the peace there who will see that the rope is his end: but here we are at my quarters," and as the chief ceased speaking he halted before a tent, and a negro came forward and took his horse.

"Boston, look to the horses of this gentleman, too, and then let us have supper, for we are as hungry as grizzlies."

Edgar glanced about him with deepest interest. He saw half a dozen tents, small, but comfortable, and indicating constant use from their weather-stained appearance.

Before them were brush shelters which protected them from the noonday sun, and in the rear of each was a camp-fire, around which were the men eating their evening meal.

The fires cast a ruddy glow, and up the canyon were seen a number of horses staked out.

There were a score of men visible, and, with the men off on duty Edgar Dumont judged that they must be half the force of the Rocky Mountain Detectives.

He had heard much of Dave Cook and his Secret Service Men, and it was that which had caused him to come and see if they could help him in his hunt for Brandt, the Bravo, whose trail he was upon.

He had searched for them from camp to camp, and certainly his coming was under most favorable circumstances, as he had saved the life of the chief.

A man came forward and greeted General Cook as he rode up to his tent, one who was evidently in command of the camp in the absence of his superior.

"Well, Ronald, I'm back again, and I have news, too—but for my young friend here I would never have gotten to camp."

"Permit me to introduce you, Ronald, to Mr. Edgar Dumont, of Texas, and remember, I owe him my life."

"That fellow, Lucky Jim, has gotten to the end of his rope, as this time he will not escape, as I wish you to take him over to Gold Dust City and give him to the judge with my compliments."

"Been to supper?"

"Yes, chief," and Ronald greeted the guest of the general warmly, and then led the prisoner, Lucky Jim, as he was known to the detectives, over to his camp, where he was given some supper and placed under guard.

Boston proved himself a good cook, and the larder of the detective chief was well filled, so that Edgar Dumont greatly enjoyed his supper, and afterward sat down to have a talk with the man he had come so far to see.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONE OF THEM.

"Now, my young friend, I will hear what brought you here to see me?" said Chief Cook, as he made himself comfortable after supper.

"My story is not a long one, sir, and I may say at once that I am on the trail of revenge."

"Ah! I thought so, from the look in your face. Hardly old enough to have a love affair and be on a rival's track, eh?" and Chief Cook smiled.

"No, sir; but I may tell you that my father, Colonel Dillon Dumont—"

"Ah! are you his son, for I know him well by name as a Texan Ranger chief?"

"Yes, sir, he was my father, and he lived upon his ranch in Texas, while I was away at a Northern military academy."

"My mother was a Mexican lady, and her peon servants and the cowboys also dwelt upon the ranch with my father."

"I came home to spend my vacation, got a horse at the nearest town to the ranch, and arrived at midnight to find my father dead, lying murdered by the grave of my mother, and the house in flames, while the peons had also been killed, but one, then dying, told me that the Black Bravos, under their chief, Captain Brandt, had done the work."

"I had heard that they left a trail of blood and ashes behind them before leaving Texas, and you have my sympathy, Mr. Dumont, for the way you have suffered," said Dave Cook, feelingly.

"I lost my father, the servants whom I was much attached to, and my home, while the cattle and horses were driven off and sold."

"All I had left was a little money, my father's horse, and some arms and things I picked up which the robbers had left."

"I took their trail and followed it into New Mexico, and from what I learned, I am sure that the cowboys were in the pay of the Bravo chief, or, in fact, some of his band."

"My father, in fact, had written me that his cowboys were leaving him and going off to go into business for themselves, and he had to get new men."

"I see, and these new men were members of the Black Bravo's band?"

"Doubtless, sir, for not one of the cowboys could I find about the ranch, though I remained there several days."

"And you tracked the robbers into New Mexico?"

"Yes, I trailed them to New Mexico, and at last discovered that Brandt and some of his picked men had decided to give Texas a rest for awhile, and work the mines of Colorado."

"I had heard often of you and your detectives, General Cook, so I decided to look you up and see if I could not join your band to hunt down these Bravos."

"Certainly you can, and glad to have you I am."

"Now, let me tell you that I am encamped right here now on account of these Black Bravos, and I was returning from a trail to ferret out their camp when you so timely appeared before me."

"These fellows seem to have fairly struck terror into the mining-camps, for they have dashed in by night and made several rich hauls of dust, and where they have their retreat is a question that no one thus far has been able to discover, and, young though you are, I am sure you will be of great assistance to me."

"Perhaps you had better go with Ronald to Gold Dust City, and see if you can learn anything about these Bravos that my men have not picked up."

"I will be glad to go, sir."

"They wear a uniform, I suppose you know, or rather dress in black and wear masks?"

"Yes, sir, they wear black clothes, masks, and ride black horses, I have discovered, and so we have to find their retreat to run them to earth, as, being masked, they could, when they wished, come into the mines without their disguise and remain unknown."

"That is very true, and perhaps, as you are unknown here in these parts, and no one would know you as one of my men, it would be as well for you to take a run through the mining-camps alone, upon the excuse of searching for some one."

"I will let you see my men here, so you will know them, and we have secret signs that I will make known to you, in case you need their aid."

"I will hold the prisoner back for several days, but send word to Judge Baldwin that he may have him to hang on a certain day, and he can give it out so as to collect a crowd, and that will bring some of the outlaws in, so you may have a chance to watch for any man you have seen in Texas."

"If you find one, look up my men and hold him, for if we make a mistake I have the law with us, you know. I will do all I can, sir, you may rest assured; but when do you wish me to start?"

"Oh, wait a couple of days, for there is no hurry, and you and your horses need rest."

"Do you need much money?"

"No, thank you, sir."

"Well, keep an account of all you spend, for you are in my pay now, and I will give you what I do my other men."

"In a couple of days you will be rested, can get acquainted with your brother detectives and learn our ways, so make yourself comfortable, and, as Ronald has a tent alone, just share

it with him, and remember you are to feel perfectly at home in our camp."

"Thank you, sir," and the young Texan felt that he was no longer all alone in the world, but had a true friend in the man whose life he had saved, while he was proud at having been enrolled as a member of the Rocky Mountain Detectives.

CHAPTER IX.

AT GOLDEN GULCH.

THE mining-camps and towns of Colorado, at the time of which I write, were filled with a wild lot of humanity.

Many men were there, honest, industrious, and working hard for the loved ones at home, while they did all they could to avoid bloodshed and law-breaking in a community where there was little of law outside of the revolver and bowie-knife.

It was among these camps that young Dumont went as a detective. He was utterly fearless, strong in limb, active, quick of eye and a dead-shot.

Few men were better able to take care of themselves than was this Texan youth.

He went to the mining-camps pretty well posted by Dave Cook, with all he had to confront, and he went prepared to meet any danger that might confront him, to face death in any form that he might run upon it.

He was well mounted, thoroughly armed, carried no needless luggage and rode into Golden Gulch one evening and up to the shanty hotel with the air of one who had been raised in the mining-camps.

He got lodgings, such as they were, at the Bonanza, as the hotel was called, and confided in the landlord that he was in search of an uncle who had come to the mines and struck it rich, he had heard.

"What are the name o' yer uncle, young pard?" asked Landlord Jim Patrick, who though an educated man, affected the border dialect to "be in the swim," as he said, or in the fashing.

"Charles Kennerley," replied the youth, thinking of a name he had heard his father mention.

"No, I don't know sich a name, tho' I may know ther man, fer they changes ther names when they gits inter these parts, and maybe it are best they should."

"Now I recommends, thar were a Kennerdy hung here some half a year ago fer horse-stealin' and he might ha' been yer uncle."

"I guess not, sir."

"Thar was a man as had ther name o' Kenny died with his boots on one night, fer playin' more aces than thar were in a honest pack o' keards, and it might be ther name got diluted and he were your uncle."

"Ah no, my uncle did not cheat at cards, for he never played, and as he could not ride horse-back, it stands to reason he would not steal a horse."

"I do not think you were acquainted with my uncle."

"Maybe not; but if you stay in camp a few months you might run across him, and I kin give yer a fine room, only six others in it, and the best grub in the mountains, while them as knows says my table is as high as any in them tony hotels in ther East."

"It may be as high," muttered Edgar Dumont; but he said aloud:

"I will only stop until to-morrow, as I hear there is to be a hanging up at Gold Dust, and I want to get there in time to see it."

Landlord Jim Patrick was all attention at once.

A hanging was a treat to behold in that region, though frequent enough certainly.

"Is it Vigilantes?"

"No, the law."

"Oh my! whar did you git ther news?"

"Heard it as I came along."

"When is it to be?"

"In a week, I believe."

"Next Friday, then, I guesses, for Friday are the law's hang-day, though we hain't so particular when we has ropin' ter do."

"Who are ther miner?"

"A man run in by Cook's Rocky Mountain Detectives, I heard."

"The deuce! them detectives is Old Nick's own fer keeps, and no mistake."

"I'll jist write out a notis o' ther hangin' and paste it up, for thar is plenty o' ther boys as will make it a holiday to go."

"But let me show yer room, pard, fer a wash-up, and dinner will be on in half an hour, and in the mean time I'll see ef I kin hear anything o' yer uncle."

"Kennedy, you said his name was."

"No, Kennerley, Charles Kennerley."

"I'll inquire; but ef he skipped off from the States on account o' murder, bank-breaking and—"

"My uncle did no wrong, sir, but simply came to make a fortune in the mines."

"I see; but I fears he won't hitch on, if he is too honest, for ther sinner are ther one ter hev luck in these parts," and Landlord Patrick led his guest to his room.

There were six beds in it already; but a space was pointed out where another bunk could be put, and with the exception of rude closets for the occupant's clothes, there was nothing in the room, for a bench served for chairs, and the "wash-room" of the hotel was the brook that ran near the front door.

When he went in to dinner Edgar was given a seat by the landlord, who introduced him as "My young pard, Mister Edgar, who has brought me news o' a hangin' by law up at Gold Dust, on Friday, the seventeenth instant, gents, and Golden Gulch must be represented thar in ther interest o' justice and curiosity."

Many expressed their immediate determination to go, and Edgar was questioned almost to death for facts.

As he said, the man had been captured by Cook's Detectives, several of the men changed their minds about going, as they said they would be too busy.

Upon one of them Edgar Dumont's eyes had rested for a moment, but only for a moment.

He had seen the face before, and had not forgotten it, and he felt that the man had not recognized him.

The fellow was one who looked the brute, and that he was a bully to dread, young Dumont realized at once.

The table, as Landlord Jim Patrick had said, was high, for it came up well toward the chin of the diner.

The service was of tin plates, cups and steel forks and knives, without cloth, or napkins.

The food was wholesome and well cooked, and that was all that could be said in its favor, for its variety was decidedly limited.

Still the young Texan enjoyed his dinner, and, as he had brought the news of the hanging at Gold Dust City, he found himself quite an important personage.

"Who is that man?" asked Edgar of Landlord Patrick, referring to the man whom he was sure he had met before.

"That fellow are called here Satan's Cub, and he are a dandy for a devil, you bet."

"But his name?"

"Lord knows what it are, but he calls himself Texas, and we have baptized him as I told you."

"Is he a miner?"

"Ef he happens ter strike it rich, yas; but more ginerally a card sharp, and allus on the kill. Yer don't want nothin' ter do with Texas, young pard, and I gives yer that straight."

"I am not acquainted with the trails and camps hereabouts, so would like to hire a guide, and I heard him say at dinner he knew the mountains perfectly, so thought I would ask him."

"Waal, I has told yer what he are; but yer kin ask him what yer pleases, though keep yer eye onter him."

"Thank you; I will; so please call him and introduce me."

This the landlord did, saying in his quaint way:

"Texas, this are a young pard o' mine who wants ter ask yer about ther mountain trails."

"I are yer man, pard, for I knows 'em from 'way back," was the reply of the man whose acts of lawlessness had won for him the name of Satan's Cub.

"I am searching for my uncle, Charles Kennerley, and am anxious to visit all the mining-camps to find him, so would like a guide, if you know one I could get?"

"Know one? Waal, what's the matter with me?"

"But would a man of your position in the mines be willing to act as guide?"

"Waal, gold talks, and ef you has ther rocks, I are your guide."

"What would you charge me, say by the week?"

"You ter find grub and outfit?"

"Yes."

"Call it a fifty."

"All right; but I may need you for a long time, as I am determined to find my uncle."

"Whet did yer say his name were?"

"Charles Kennerley."

"Lordy! I knows him well."

"You know him?" asked Edgar, with natural surprise.

"You bet I does! He's an oldish man."

"Yes."

"Has grayish hair?"

"Yes."

"Is medium tall?"

"He is."

"They calls him Charlie for short?"

"I guess so."

"I kin find him for yer, pard."

"Then get ready to start in the morning."

"I'll do it."

And in the morning they started for the trail, young Dumont taking Texas as his guide, against the urging of Landlord Jim Patrick for him not to do so.

"Don't fail ter watch him," was Jim Patrick's parting advice to the youth.

CHAPTER X.

THE DETECTIVE'S GUIDE.

THE reader has seen that Edgar Dumont had a motive in making the desperado his guide, and what it was will be developed soon.

Though appearing to wholly trust Texas, Edgar never allowed one act of the man to escape him.

He watched him closely during the day, and to keep him from suspecting anything of his purpose, pretended to become very confidential as they rode along together.

He told Texas a long story of his family, and of his uncle, said that he had with him considerable money, so that if he did not find his uncle he would be able to get back home.

Texas drank it all in eagerly.

Shrewd, cunning as he was, he was being deceived by a mere boy.

"Whar is yer from, pard?" he asked, after awhile.

"Texas."

The desperado started, and cast a quick glance at the youth.

But Edgar's face was as innocent as a child's.

"Yas? But whar does yer hail from in Texas?"

Edgar Dumont gave the name of a town in eastern Texas, and asked again:

"Have you ever been there?"

"Well, yas, I has; but it was over San Antonio way, and that's why they called me Texas, 'cause I come from thar to ther mines."

"Them were bad parts whar I lived, 'cause ther Comanches, ther Greasers, and ther Black Bravos made it hard on a honest ranchman."

"Who were the Black Bravos?" asked Edgar.

"Oh! they was Texas robbers; but they give up there and is said ter be on ther gold trails o' Colorado now, though I hain't seen none o' 'em."

"Guess you has heerd o' 'em."

"Yes, several times; but I have not been in the mines long, you know."

"I hope we won't meet the Black Bravos."

"Now I only hopes we won't, pard, and that are why I takes this trail round through the mountains, for ef we did meet 'em, why it would all be up with us only too sudden; but yer say yer uncle hev struck it rich out here?"

"So his letter said, that he had found a mine that would pan out largely, and it was away off to itself."

"He wanted me to come out and join him, but I lost the address he gave me, so have to look him up."

"I see, and maybe, if you finds him he'll make you his heir?"

"Yes, I am his heir."

"He's not married?"

"No."

"Has yer brothers and sisters?"

"None."

"Maybe he has?"

"No, my parents are dead."

"Waal, you are ther one ter git his dust, ef he should die; but didn't yer people kick ag'in' yer comin' out here?"

"I have no relatives, and so no one knew of my coming."

"I see, and you must feel lonesome like; but I'll be yer friend, young feller, and just as lief help yer uncle and you work the mine as not."

"Folks does say as I has a rough way and ail that; but I has a big heart and are too honest fer my own good."

"But I likes you, and I'll stick with yer and no mistake! but we camp here fer dinner," and the guide led the way off the trail to where a rivulet fell over the rocks not far away, and with grass in abundance about, was a good camping-place.

They lingered long in their noonday camp, as the guide said the way before them was a hard one, and they needed all the rest they could get.

When once again on the way Edgar Dumont remarked:

"This is a round-about trail, Texas."

"It are indeed; but it's about the only one we kin follow, and we'll reach a good camping-ground afore dark, but we will hev ter be awful careful, as we will be in a neighborhood whar ther road-agints sometimes comes."

It was just before sunset that they reached the camping-place, a wild defile in the mountains.

But there was good water and grass, the canyon was well sheltered, and the rocky nature of the ground, as the guide said, left no trace to it.

They ate a good supper, for the appetites of both seemed sharpened by the crisp mountain air, and then Texas said:

"Pard, I thinks it well as one o' us sh'u'd be on ther watch ter-night, so I'll jist take stand ontil one o'clock and you kin hang on from thet hour ontil dawn o' day, when we kin light out and git our breakfast arter a few miles ridin'."

"I am always ready to be on the safe side, Texas; but I don't think you should stand six hours to my four."

"I are older and more ust to loss o' sleep, pard, while it are ther dangersome hour up ter midnight."

"All right, Texas," replied the youth, and so it was arranged.

The horses were watered and staked out, a fire was built and supper was cooked, Texas having shot some game, and spreading his blankets on the fine straw Edgar Dumont lay down to rest, while Texas took his stand a hundred feet distant down the canyon.

The youth however did not go to sleep.

He lay with his eyes and ears wide open, and he was as watchful as a panther.

Suddenly his eyes saw a moving form, and he beheld the guide steal softly by him up the canyon.

Had the guide come ten feet nearer he would have received a bullet in his brain from the youth, who, though apparently sleeping had his revolver pointing out of his blanket to kill if necessary; but the man passed on and soon disappeared toward the horses.

Then the keen ears of the Young Texan detected the sound of hoofs and he ran and cautiously crept toward the grassy plot where the horses had been staked out.

The guide's horse was missing; but the saddle still hung upon the tree where it had been placed by the rider when he came into camp.

The youth knew by this, and the fact that the guide's blanket and traps had been left, that he would return.

But where had he gone?

Would he return alone?

These questions the Young Texan could not answer, but he was determined not to be caught napping.

The idea flashed upon him to mount his horse and depart.

But then he concluded that, being forewarned, he was a match for the guide if he meant to be treacherous.

So he sat down to await the return of the man he now had every reason to doubt.

At last he heard the sound of hoofs, and his practical ear told him that there was but one horse approaching down the canyon, and he was moving slowly.

He retreated to his blankets and lay down, but a revolver was in each hand ready for use.

He soon after saw a form steal toward him, and he covered it with his revolver as before, ready to fire at the slightest act of treachery on the part of the guide.

CHAPTER XI.

HEMMED IN.

UNTIL he had passed him by, Edgar Dumont was certain that the guide meant him harm.

His movements were so stealthy, and his acts had been so suspicious that the youth felt that he meant to kill him.

But the guide passed on and thus saved his own life, for he did not know that a revolver muzzle covered him, and a dead-sure hand was toying with the trigger.

The youth turned over noiselessly as the guide passed on, and saw his form disappear down the canyon toward his stand.

Thus an hour passed and then the guide was seen returning.

"Come, pard, git up, fer it are your time ter stand on duty, and I are awful tired," he said aloud, as he approached the youth.

Edgar Dumont pretended he did not hear him, and not until the guide shook him did he rouse up and ask:

"What is it?"

"Waal, boy pard, yer sleeps like a drunkard, and yer sh'u'd not do it in these parts, or yer may wake up some time with a bullet in yer."

"I say it's your stand now."
 "Ah! yes! I am ready; but have you heard anything?"

"Not a whisper, save a hootin' owl."

"Where did you stand?"

"Down the canyon a hundred feet."

"And up the canyon?"

"Thar's nothin' ter look fer thet way," said the guide, who did not explain just why danger might not come from one direction as well as the other.

The youth took his rifle and went to his post, and was at once on the alert.

The guide did not appear to be long awake, and the youth walked by him up the canyon and watched in that direction.

As Texas had ridden off that way, it was natural for Edgar Dumont to expect, if harm was to follow that midnight ride, it would come from that direction.

He heard nothing, saw nothing, during the time he stood on watch, and he knew well how to watch, though the guide thought it was his first night on duty of the kind.

The young Texan had stood his post with the rangers, on many a trail after Indians and Mexican raiders, while he had stood as a sentinel many a night at the Military Academy.

At last, as the first rays of dawn appeared in the canyon, he returned to the tree, beneath which slept the guide and called out:

"Get up, Pard Texas, for dawn is breaking."

In an instant the guide was upon his feet, his rifle in hand, as though he had had a bad dream from which he was rudely awakened.

"Ah! but yer skeert me, pard, and I thought there were trouble brewing," he said.

The youth laughed, but responded:

"No, I have seen no cause for alarm; but shall we be off?"

"Yas, roll up yer blankets and git things in shape. Has yer seen ther hosses?"

"No, but I heard them awhile ago," and Edgar rolled up his blankets and got all in readiness, as did also the guide.

Then they moved toward their horses, to suddenly halt as a sharp voice sung out:

"Hands up!"

"A dozen rifles cover you!"

It was daylight now. The two men saw that their horses were in the background and held by two forms in deep black, with masked faces, while, under the shadows of the cliff, stood half a score of men, also masked and in black clothes, their rifles leveled upon them.

"The Black Bravos, boy pard, or I am a educated liar!" cried the guide, as his hands shot above his head at the command of the chief.

The young Texan had taken in the situation in an instant. He saw at a glance that they were entrapped for, turning his gaze over his shoulder, he discovered there were enemies in the rear as well as in front; so he was not a whit behind the guide in raising his hands over his head.

One of the Black Bravos then approached and confronted them. His face was masked, and his clothes and appearance were different from the men with him, in that the former were of fine material and the latter showed him to be a man of distinguished presence.

He wore gold spurs, the pistols and knife in his belt were mounted with the same precious metal, and his top-boots were such as a general officer might wear.

His face was covered with a face-shaped cloth mask that fitted it closely, and was of a dull hue that gave it the appearance of being flesh at a distance.

His head was sheltered by a black slouch hat, encircled by a gold cord, and in front was a pin representing a skull and cross-bones, delicately carved in ivory.

His coat was buttoned up close; the tails were long and he looked most ministerial; but for the mask, he might readily have been taken for the chaplain of a cavalry regiment.

His men wore jackets instead of coats, their weapons were silver-mounted, while also their heels were armed with huge Texan spurs.

The latter, too, carried repeating-rifles in addition to their other arms; but all had on their hats the skull and cross-bones, though they were of some red material, and not of ivory.

The emotions of the young Texan it would be hard to describe, as he beheld himself face to face with the men he deemed the slayers of his father, the destroyers of his home, as also that he was their prisoner.

He gazed upon the masked face of the chief with a beating heart and flashing eyes.

"Well, sirs, who and what are you?" demanded the chief, sternly, his eyes fixed upon the

youth, rather than upon the guide, as it appeared through the eye-holes in the mask.

"Spit it out, boy pard, and tell him what we is, for you kin talk straight, I guesses," urged the guide.

"Who and what are you?" was the query of Edgar in response.

"You must be a Yankee, to answer a question by asking one; but that you may know just whom you are talking to, I'll tell you that I am known as Captain Brandt the Black Bravo, and these are my men, while you two are my game just now."

"Well, Captain Brandt the Black Bravo, what do you want with us?" was the undaunted youth's retort.

"First, I wish you to place your rifles and your belt of arms at your feet, and then to step back five paces. Remember, you are covered by the rifles of my men."

"It is not likely that we can forget what is so plain before our eyes," and, as he spoke, the young Texan unslung his rifle from his back, unbuckled his belt, and laid the weapons at his feet. This done, he stepped backward five paces.

The guide did likewise, and the Black Bravo chief advanced to the weapons and halted there.

"Now, again I ask you, who and what are you?"

"My name is Edgar, I am a Texan, searching for one in the mines whom I am most anxious to find, and this man is my guide."

"Well, Pard Edgar, I will just say that I want you and your guide, so you are to go with me. And, mind, no nonsense, for the Black Bravos hold life cheap."

"Men, get their horses, tie them to their saddles and blindfold them; then come to the retreat."

And, mounting a fine-looking, jet-black horse, the Black Bravo chief rode up the canyon, his men soon after following with the prisoners.

CHAPTER XII.

THE THIRD TIME.

I MUST ask my reader to go with me in a glance over the past, some time before the birth of my hero, Edgar Dumont.

In an Eastern State, living in elegance, and with every indication of refinement about him, was a merchant by the name of Kennerley, and his only child, a lovely maiden of eighteen.

This maiden, Kate Kennerley, refined, beautiful, accomplished, was engaged to a deserving young man of fine family, but possessed of little of this world's goods, and though Mr. Kennerley greatly admired his daughter's lover, Dillon Dumont, he felt constrained to break the match off that she might marry one who was said to possess a large fortune.

That one, Gale Davenport, was however a bankrupt, having run through with his large inheritance and was anxious to marry Kate Kennerley to redeem his fallen fortunes.

So matters stood a few days before the intended marriage of Kate Kennerley and Dillon Dumont.

Seated in her room one day, overlooking the work of seamstresses, Kate received word to come to the library to see her father.

She had supposed him to be down town at his store, so hastened to the library, fearing to find him ill.

His face was pale and his manner nervous as he said:

"My child, sit down for I wish to have a talk with you."

"The truth is I have come to ask you to save me from ruin."

"Oh father! what can you mean?"

"I mean, my child, that I have notes coming due and not a dollar to meet them with."

"But you are so rich, father."

"All appears so, but I am on the verge of ruin, and were my debts paid to-day I would not have a dollar, but in fact would still owe largely."

"It has not been my fault that all this has come about, and I have struggled manfully to save myself, but can see but one chance to do so."

"And that chance, father?"

"Is brought you."

"The?"

"Yas, for I have an offer for your hand, as you have long known, from Gale Davenport."

"He is a very rich man, and only this morning came to me and urged an immediate acceptance of his offer, for he loves you devotedly, he is handsome, a fine fellow though a trifle wild, and says that he will go broad to live if you refuse."

"But father, my engagement and early marriage with Mr. Dumont you seem to utterly ignore, as also the fact that I love him most dearly."

"No, he has not a dollar, so cannot save us, and you will only be a pauper if I fail."

"And do you ask me to marry Gale Davenport?"

"I implore you to do so."

"On what terms, father?"

"Well, if you marry him I can renew my notes for thirty days and then get the money from him to tide over until I can recover myself."

"Are you sure of this?"

"Yes, he promised it to-day."

"If I do not marry him?"

"I go to ruin within ten days."

"Save me, my child, for the sacrifice is not so great," and the selfish man buried his head in deepest grief.

"Father, the sacrifice is far more than you can understand; but I will yield to the bargain you make with Mr. Davenport, and will write to Dillon Dumont at once, severing our engagement, and then I am at the service of the one whose wife I am to become whenever he deems fit to claim me."

So saying, she sat down at her father's desk and wrote to the man she so dearly loved, telling him that at the last moment she had changed her mind, and intended to become the wife of another.

This letter was given to her father to mail at once, and that night he brought her news that the wedding day with Gale Davenport was set upon the one she had intended to become the wife of Dillon Dumont.

But Kate Kennerley did not marry Gale Davenport, as a note he had forged, to raise money until he could get possession of what he expected to receive with his wife, was discovered and he had to fly to escape arrest.

But the merchant was not to be outdone by this mishap.

He simply congratulated himself that his daughter had escaped marrying a penniless scamp, and at once turned to another for aid.

That other was a bachelor, quiet-mannered, by no means showy in his style of living, and possessing in reality a large fortune.

The name of this man was Calvin Maynell, and he was a cynic, good-looking, well educated and had traveled extensively.

Some said that he had been disappointed in love in his younger years, as he seemed to avoid society.

He had sprung in front of a runaway team one day and checked them.

In the carriage was Kate Kennerley, and but for his act she would have lost her life, as the canal was before them and the drawbridge open.

Soon after Calvin Maynell had called upon Merchant Kennerley and asked for the hand of his daughter.

She was engaged, and, as then the merchant did not need money, the offer was declined.

After the flight of Gale Davenport, Mr. Kennerley called upon Calvin Maynell.

He asked that gentleman for a loan, and a large one too.

Mr. Maynell heard the merchant's appeal to the end, and then said:

"As your expected son-in-law has run off, Mr. Kennerley, to escape imprisonment for forgery, I now again ask for the hand of your daughter, allowing her to name the day when she is willing to become my wife, and, if you bring me her pledge to marry me, I will give you a check for the sum you ask, on a note due the day of the wedding, and which I will return to you without asking you to pay it, taking your daughter, in fact, as payment."

Mr. Kennerley was delighted, and at once hastened home to see his daughter.

Kate Kennerley was mourning in her room over her disappointed love, and her escape from marrying a rogue.

She had heard that Dillon Dumont had at once left for parts unknown; it was said to join the Texan army in its fight for freedom from Mexico.

She buried her love in her heart, and began to decide upon her future, for her father would fail, and she would have to go to work.

But she did not know the resources of her father for getting out of tight places, and was surprised to see him come in with a smiling face.

Her engagement had been known to but a few, and hardly any one had heard of the intended change from Dillon Dumont to Gale Davenport.

How Calvin Maynell had gotten hold of the secret Mr. Kennerley could not understand.

"The marriage can take place at once, and no one will be the wiser, thinking the other reports but rumors," said the merchant, as he returned home.

He at once made known to his daughter what Calvin Maynell had said, and she consented without a word to marry the man who had saved her life, and, upon the day set for her wedding first with Dillon Dumont, then with Gale Davenport, she became the wife of the man who, at least, had the claim upon her of having saved her life.

CHAPTER XIII. THE HEIRESS.

CALVIN MAYNELL by no means made a bad husband to the girl who had become his wife.

He kept his word to the merchant and handed over the note, in payment for his daughter's hand.

Soon after the marriage of his daughter, Kennerley died; but he had recuperated his shattered fortunes and left his daughter a fair inheritance.

To Calvin Maynell and his wife a child was born, a little daughter the image of her mother, and soon after Mrs. Maynell expressed a desire to travel.

She seemed restless, and anxious to be constantly on the go, though she made a true and devoted wife.

Her husband humored her in all things, and they roamed from place to place, their hearts and souls wrapped up in their daughter.

As the little Cora grew in years, her parents spared no pains or expense to have her become a most accomplished woman.

But, as Cora developed into womanhood the first deep sorrow of her life came in the death of her idolized mother.

They buried her in the cemetery where were the graves of bygone generations of Maynells, and the husband bought a house near and the daughter made her daily pilgrimages to the last resting-place of her mother.

From the day, almost, of his wife's death Calvin Maynell became a changed man.

His devotion to his daughter appeared the same, and yet he became morose and seemed to take no pleasure in life.

He seldom went away from home, and when Cora one day told him that a young army officer whom she dearly loved had asked her to become his wife, he said simply:

"Captain Borden Branch is a fine fellow, a gentleman and one to make you happy, my child; but I do not believe that he has much else than his pay."

"If he can live on it, sir, I will not be much extra expense to him, while I believe I have an inheritance of my own from my mother."

"Yes, she placed in my keeping a handsome sum in money for you, and I invested it as I have done my own fortune, but which I am sorry to say is not in as healthy a condition as I could wish."

"But I shall certainly give my consent for you to marry Borden Branch, when he asks me for your hand."

And this Mr. Maynell did, and the lovely girl became the betrothed of the young army officer, and a day was set for the wedding.

But Mr. Maynell's affairs went from bad to worse, for a bank failed in which he had large deposits, and some stocks he had bought dropped fearfully low in value.

These misfortunes seemed to arouse the man from his moroseness, and he attempted to regain his fortune by speculating with what he had left.

At first he was successful; but he grew reckless, like all gamblers when they win heavily, and lost by one sweep more than he had regained.

Another speculation also failed, and the home property was mortgaged to get money for further speculations.

The man became desperate, for the day appointed for his daughter's marriage was approaching, and he was so cramped in money matters that he was driven to the last extremity, and that was to mortgage for all that he could his last piece of property.

A great belle in society, Cora Maynell had many lovers, won as much by her beauty and lovely character, as the fact that she was an heiress, or, at least, supposed to be.

But she was true to her soldier lover, and refused all offers from others.

Among those who had sought her hand was a cousin, a wild fellow, but one who, like her father, had inherited a large fortune.

He dearly loved Cora, and changed his wild ways to please her, though she regarded him only as a friend and cousin.

As the marriage day of Cora grew nearer and nearer, her cousin urged her more and more to break her engagement with Borden Branch and become his wife, and one day, to her surprise, her father also made the same request.

She was indignant at this, and a coldness at once sprung up between the father and daughter.

But soon Cora Maynell was to know all, for her father told her that the end was at hand, as every dollar of his fortune, and her own intrusted to his keeping had gone.

Mortgages were due and if not paid they became paupers.

"I will not marry Borden Branch under false pretenses, letting him believe me an heiress when I am a pauper, so will write and tell him so," she said.

She wrote and released him, telling him the whole story, and intrusting the letter to her cousin to mail.

To her surprise, for she had hoped it would be otherwise, a short note came in reply, accepting the release.

Then the story of her mother's life was repeated in her own, and, to save her father from ruin, financially, she consented to become the wife of her cousin.

The day of marriage was set by the young man, who seemed most anxious to have it over with.

As it drew near he became anxious, nervous, and appeared to suffer mentally, while Cora Maynell seemed to become utterly indifferent as to her future.

The day at last came round, and the marriage was to be a private one.

But at the last moment came news that the bridegroom that was to be had taken his own life.

The papers that had the marriage notice one day, having prematurely given it, followed the next with an account of the suicide of the bridegroom, and the cause became known.

He had run through with his fortune, was anxious to get possession of what he believed would be his cousin's legacy, and discovered only on the wedding-day that she was as penniless as himself.

He had committed crimes to get money to tide him over, and knowing that all was lost took his own life.

Cora Maynell and her father gave up their home and the two parted, the father to go to the mines of the far West to seek another fortune, and the daughter to struggle with the world for a living.

In a grand Hudson River villa, the home of Mr. Thomas St. John, a wealthy New York merchant, Cora Maynell obtained a place as governess and companion to the beautiful fourteen-year old heiress of Wildlands, and the idol of her parents, and with every luxury about her, a loving charge and kind friends in Mr. and Mrs. St. John, her life ran smoothly if not happily along.

Her father, digging in a Colorado mine, found gold, and thus had the foundation on which to build up another fortune.

But death came to him one day on a mountain trail, and he had to confide to another his hard-earned gold, and beg him to find his daughter and give to her the riches he had dug for her from the earth.

That one sought honestly to carry out the trust placed in him; but in that wild land death from an assassin's bullet overtook him one day in the mountains, just as a horseman appeared to drive off his enemy and listen to his dying words, and the entreaty to carry out the wishes of Calvin Maynell and his own.

That horseman was Borden Branch, the soldier lover of Cora Maynell, who had resigned from the army and become a wanderer about the world.

CHAPTER XIV.

WILDLANDS.

MR. THOMAS ST. JOHN was a merchant prince of the metropolis, and his business was founded upon a firm footing and brought him in a very large income.

He and his lonely wife had been "sweethearts" from childhood, and they were most happy in their home life, for they had a lovely child of fourteen, Allene, to bless their declining years.

From an advertisement in the *Herald* one day, Mr. St. John had obtained a governess for Allene.

He found her to be a sad-faced, beautiful young lady, highly accomplished, refined in manners, and one who was just what he wished for the governess of Allene, who was budding into lovely maidenhood.

Since the day of her coming to Wildlands the St. Johns, parents and child, had been drawn toward Cora Maynell, the governess, with the warmest regard.

She had proven that she possessed a superior education, her accent in French and German were perfect, she excelled as an artist and her voice was one that would have gained for her a situation upon the stage had she been willing to accept it.

She had no references, and in fact needed none, for her face was sufficient.

She was well dressed, in fact handsomely dressed, and in perfect taste.

She had jewelry, but seldom wore any, and of her past nothing was known, nor did she vouchsafe a word.

She was a beautiful mystery, so sad-faced that all knew she had known bitter sorrows in the past; but no one dared question where she gave no her confidence without the asking.

Her duties were perfectly attended to, and Allene improved rapidly in all her studies under her tuition, while she also became toned down, for she had been quite wild with the little restraint put upon her by her parents.

"Miss Maynell never scolds, she only looks, and that is worse than a spanking used to be from you, mamma, when I was a little girl," Allene had explained to her mother soon after the governess arrived.

It was not long before Cora Maynell became one of the family at Wildlands, as much so as though she had been Allene's elder sister.

Wildlands was certainly a most charming spot, and no more beautiful home overlooked the majestic Hudson River.

Its grounds comprised hundreds of acres—a park, flower-gardens, conservatories and beautiful walks and drives, with summer-houses and arbors in which to rest.

The views were superb, and the mansion was large, with most comfortable rooms throughout, and furnished with a degree of magnificence that showed great wealth in the owner, as well as refined taste.

The liveried servants were as trained as clock-work, the library was full of the choicest books, there were a piano and harp in the parlor, an organ in the grand hall, and Allene also was the possessor of a guitar, violin and banjo, all of which she played with no mean skill, and upon the last two instruments took delight in instructing her instructress, Miss Maynell, whom, a skilled musician, she found a most apt pupil.

One day a letter came for Miss Maynell, postmarked from a Colorado mining-camp.

It told of her father's death, and that she was heiress to a considerable sum laid up in the mine for her.

The name of the writer was Delorme, he stated, and he was carrying out certain instructions as he had received them from her father.

As requested, Miss Maynell answered the letter, after seeking the advice of Mr. St. John, telling her unknown correspondent what to do regarding her share of the money.

But days passed into weeks, and months followed without reply, and then came another letter, in a different hand, and from one who signed himself B. Borden.

This writer explained that the man Delorme, her former correspondent, had been slain, and that he, the writer, had nursed him in his dying hours and had pledged him to carry out certain instructions.

As he, B. Borden, understood it, the mine was known as the Maynell-Delorme Mine, and she was half-owner in what had been gotten from it, and what might be yet found there.

The writer sent her a Salt Lake City bank draft on New York for five thousand dollars, and explained that the balance on hand due her would be forwarded by draft when he had instructions from her.

This time also Clara Maynell submitted all to the merchant as her adviser, and a letter was written in response.

There was one thing that puzzled Miss Maynell, and that was that the writing seemed disguised, and the name, B. Borden, recalled to her the name of the one man in the world she had ever loved—Borden Branch.

But she knew that the officer had resigned from the army, after she had broken her engagement with him, and had gone to Europe; at least it was so said.

Yet the name had recalled him to her, and the recollection was a sad one indeed.

But weeks again went by, and no response came from B. Borden, to the letter of Cora Maynell.

She wrote again, and yet no reply.

Again she wrote, and just as in the case of De'orme, she received no response.

This certainly appeared very strange, and she and Mr. St. John were at a loss to account for it.

The more they talked it over, the more suspicious and mysterious seemed the circumstance.

At last Mr. St. John proposed a way to solve the mystery, as time went by and no word came from the unknown correspondent in the West.

That it was not a hoax the draft for five thousand dollars had clearly proven.

So it was decided to call upon Captain John Boland, the Secret Service chief in New York, and have him put a detective on the track to work up the case.

This was done, and who that border detective was will be made known to the reader in due time.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PRISONERS.

LET us now return to the prisoners, Edgar Dumont and Texas the guide, whom we left at the mercy of the Black Bravos.

Blindfolded and bound to their horses, the two were taken by their captors up the canyon, along a valley trail and thence up into a mountain range.

The approach left no trail, so rocky was the soil, and numerous streams were crossed, so that the best tracker on the plains would have found it next to impossible to find the traces left by the horses of the Bravos.

After a ride of some three miles the ridge of a mountain range was reached.

It was fringed with mountain pines, and the level space was thus inclosed, and here was the camp of the outlaws.

It was a rude camp of wicky-ups to protect the men from storms, and the approach to it was by the way of the narrow canyon, almost impassable, by which the party had come.

On all other sides the mountain was too steep for a horse to climb, though a man could do so, but at the venture of his life from slipping down the precipices here and there.

The wicky-up of the chief was larger and better than the others, and he had a hammock swung in it for his bed, while a table, which could be taken to pieces and put on a pack-horse, served for his meals, and writing when he had need to do the latter.

A few books, some papers, and a portfolio of sketches were scattered about, with arms of various kinds, and a box that held the plates, cups and other things necessary for the culinary department of a well-regulated camp.

The prisoners were divided, after their arrival in camp, one being taken to one end, the other, the guide, being put under the eye of the chief, as though he was to be feared more than was the youth.

But for this circumstance the youth would have believed that he had wronged Texas in his suspicions against him.

He could not account for his having left camp at night, and said nothing to him about it; but, as though knowing what was in the thoughts of his young friend, Texas had remarked, as they stood together in this outlaw camp after their arrival:

"I'm awful tired, and will be glad to rest, for my horse slipped his lariat last night and strayed off, and it were a hard thing fer me ter find him."

"I hopes they'll let us rest now."

This remark convinced Edgar Dumont that he had wronged his guide.

But when the youth had his bandage removed from his eyes, his first glance was at the guide.

The latter seemed to have been that moment unblindfolded; but Edgar Dumont could hardly see at first, and noticed that the guide's eyes had not the look of having been covered as his had been.

Then when the chief said:

"Lead that borderman to my tent and tie him to a tree there, for I am determined that he shall not escape," the youth's suspicions again were awakened that all was not well.

He was taken to a camp near and secured, while Texas was led to the other end where the chief had his quarters.

Without appearing to do so, the youth watched the departure of the guide with a guard, and he noted that the chief held a conversation with him.

More, even at that distance he observed that the chief was unmasked, while all about him still wore their masks.

He determined to watch closely all that went on.

Having been taken to a tree he was allowed the freedom of his hands, but a chain was locked around one ankle and then made fast about the tree.

Its length gave him a few feet to move about in, and his blankets were spread down for him, after which one of the masked men brought him some breakfast.

He ate it with a relish, but saw that where the Bravos were eating they removed their masks, but kept their faces turned away from him.

He noted them closely and came to the conclusion that they were a band of desperadoes who would halt at no deed of villainy.

The chief came to see him during the afternoon, but Edgar Dumont saw that he had again masked his face.

"I wish you to tell me, young man, all about yourself."

"I have nothing more to tell."

"Who is this man you seek?"

"An uncle."

"What is his name?"

"Charles Kennerley."

"He is a miner?"

"Yes."

"How long has he been in the mines?"

"For some years."

"You are from Texas?"

"Yes."

"Has your uncle struck it rich, as we say out in this country?"

"I guess he has, for he wrote for me to come and join him, and hinted as much."

"And where is he?"

"That I have to find out, having lost the address; but the guide knows him, and can find him."

"Well, I shall hold you for ransom and let the guide go on and look your uncle up."

"I shall give him one month to find him in, and, at the end of that time will kill you if he does not return with the five thousand dollars I demand to let you go free."

"If your uncle cares for you, he will surely not let you die rather than pay the sum I demand."

Edgar Dumont was in a quandary.

He knew well that the guide could never find a man who existed only in imagination, and as no one would be willing to put up five thousand dollars for his freedom, it was a pretty sure thing that he must die, at the end of thirty days, if the Bravo chief kept his word, and he had every reason to believe that he would do so, judging by what he knew of his deeds.

CHAPTER XVI.

IS IT A PLOT?

THE decision came to by Captain Brandt the Black Bravo, to send the guide after ransom money for him, again caused Edgar Dumont to feel that he had wronged his fellow-prisoner.

The fact that he had been captured by the Black Bravos, was a cause of congratulation to Edgar Dumont, or would have been could he have seen any means of escape.

If he could escape it would take him but a very short while to bring Detective Dave Cook and his men upon the outlaw camp.

But, ironed as was, and with the knowledge that the guide was to be sent off on a foolish errand, as he well knew, brought the young Texan to a full realization of his dangerous situation.

There before him was the man he believed to have been the murderer of his father, the destroyer of his home, and who had made him almost a penniless wanderer, his main desire to avenge his dead parent.

The face of the man was masked; but Captain Brandt, the Bravo, had done the cruel deed, and the one before him claimed to be that personage.

He had kept his identity from his enemy, who, in truth, might not know of his existence, for Edgar knew of no early acquaintance between his father and the Black Bravo.

How he longed to have the situation between them reversed, and thus have Captain Brandt in his power.

And so the youth was left to his own painful reflections, so threw himself down upon his blanket as though he desired to be alone.

But his eyes were wide open, and he watched the departure of the chief.

He saw him return to his own camp, and soon after he observed the guide join him there.

Texas seemed to sneak there, as though not wishing to be seen by the youth, should he be looking that way.

But Edgar saw that Texas was not in irons, and again his suspicions were aroused.

After spending half an hour, sitting down and talking to the chief, whom, from his position he saw was unmasked, the guide arose and left the spot, in the same stealthy manner as he had gone there.

When he came back he was in irons and accompanied by a guard, while the chief, who came out of the wicky-up and joined him, had again resumed his mask.

The three came directly toward the spot where Edgar Dumont was lying.

As they advanced, the chief said:

"Now, young man, give this man all the information you can about your uncle, and how to find him, for he goes to save your life."

"If he comes back with the ransom for you, all right—you go free; but if he fails you, and me, then you die, and I shall hunt him to his death."

"Now tell him all you can about your uncle."

"He knows all that I can tell him," was the reply of the young detective.

"Then you have nothing to say to him?"

"Nothing."

"Remember, your life is at stake."

"So you said before."

"And you cannot aid him to find your uncle?"

"I employed him to aid me in my search for him."

"Well, guide, you are to go on your search with what knowledge you have, and as you say you know the man, you will find little trouble in discovering him, I guess."

"I'll do my best, you bet, fer I doesn't want my young pard ter tarn up his toes," said the guide.

"He will surely do so, unless you find his uncle."

"Do you think my uncle, or any other man, would be such a fool as to trust the guide with five thousand dollars?" asked Edgar.

"He'll have to do so, or he will never see his nephew alive."

"Then you might as well kill me now."

"I guess I kin persuade him thet ther dust has ter be put up fer yer, young pard," chipped in the guide.

After some further conversation, the chief ordered the guide to be blindfolded, and led to the canyon where the prisoners had been taken, and there relieved of his arms and horse.

"You better write your uncle a note," suggested the chief at the last minute.

"My hands are cramped from having been bound, so you write it and I will sign it," replied the youth.

The chief sent for pen, ink and paper, and when it was brought from his camp, he sat down and wrote, in a bold hand:

"TO CHARLES KENNERLEY, Miner:—

"Sir:—I have, as my prisoner, your nephew, Edgar Kennerley, and I demand a ransom for him of five thousand dollars."

"Should it not be paid me by to-day one month, I shall put him to death."

"If paid, I shall at once set him free."

"He will indorse this as proof of my intentions regarding him."

"BRANDT,
"The Black Bravo Chief."

Across this Edgar wrote:

"UNCLE CHARLES:—What the chief of the Black Bravos states is true, and I beg you to save my life, for I will repay the debt some day."

"EDGAR KENNERLEY."

Having placed this paper in the hands of the guide, the chief bade the guard depart with him, and he walked away, not comprehending the peculiar smile upon the face of the youth, who muttered to himself:

"Having begun to play this miner uncle search I must play it to the end."

"Texas said he knew my uncle, so let us see him find the man who will pay the ransom demanded to keep me from being killed."

"Somehow I believe they are playing pards in a game against me."

"Well, just now, they hold the winning cards."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FALSE GUIDE.

THAT Edgar Dumont had cause for his suspicions against the guide, the actions of the latter, when known, will fully prove.

He had heard the story of the youth, as he told it at the mining tavern, and so had seen his chance to make a "stake" for himself.

If a life had to be taken to do so, well and good; what cared he, Satan's Cub, for that?

He knew the youth had money with him.

Then there was his horse, his equipments,

weapons, a watch and chain and his clothes, all of which the guide coveted.

Then, if he found the supposed uncle, he would have the hold of friendship upon the youth, and that might lead to something better than to rob him at once.

If the uncle could not be found, it would be time enough then to rob his victim.

Thus Texas argued, and it is needless to say that he knew of no such a man as Charles Kennerley, miner.

So the two set off together, and the first night out the guide selected a camp suitable to his purposes, for he had formed a plot during the day which he would carry out, having felt that in some way his steps were being dogged.

There would be but one motive for any one to dog his steps, and that alarmed the guide into changing his plans.

So it was that he led the way to the canyon where they had gone into camp for the night.

When assured that Edgar Dumont was asleep, for he did not believe the youth suspected him of treachery, the guide had slipped by him to where he had staked his horse and mounting the animal, without saddling him, had ridden away up the canyon.

He allowed his horse to take his own trail, and in time found himself on the ridge where the Black Bravos had their camp.

As he did so he was covered by a rifle and the following conversation quickly occurred, intelligible to those who took part in it only:

"Halt!" cried a voice.

"Captain!" responded the guide.

"Brandt!"

"Black!"

"Bravo!"

"Who?"

"Bricks."

"Pass!"

As the last word left the lips of the man who had brought the guide to a halt, the latter rode on, merely asking:

"Chief here?"

"Yes."

He rode on up to the wicky up where a light was visible, and he saw the Black Bravo chief seated at his table, a lamp swung over his head, shedding a light down upon some work he was engaged in with pencil and paper.

The chief looked up as he heard a step and said quickly:

"Ah! Bricks, you here?"

"Yes, chief."

"Any news?"

"I have a camp three miles away, in Sweet Water Canyon, and a youngster thar asleep, who are out here a-lookin' fer a uncle whom he says lives in ther mines."

"Ther uncle sent fer him ter come, but he lost ther address, and so are s'archin' for ther ole man."

"Well?"

"Ther young feller are well fixed, and tuk me as guide, fer I told him I know'd his uncle, and I thought we c'u'd make a good stake out o' ther youngster, by holdin' him ontill ther ole man gives up dust fer him, for I kin find him as well without ther boy as with him."

The chief remained silent for some minute or more.

He was unmasked and his really handsome face, in spite of the footprints thereon left by crime, was hard to read.

He had listened with the deepest attention to all that the guide said, and then remarked quietly:

"Sit down, Bricks."

The man obeyed, and then the chief continued: "Bricks, when I selected you to be one spy in the mining-camps, I thought that I acted wisely."

"But rumors have come to me that you could not be trusted."

"Me, captain? Yer can't trust me?" cried the man, while his face became livid.

"I did not say so; but I remarked that word had come to me that you could not be trusted."

"Oh, Lordy! what a lie that are."

"Well, Bricks, I put a man on your track, and he has dogged you for ten days, noting your every action."

"Did you know it?"

"No, chief, I didn't," responded Bricks, choking back the lie he told, for it was his consciousness of being followed that led him to change his plans regarding Edgar Dumont.

"Your coming to me now, as you do, with your report about this youth, proves that you are sincere, and that I can trust you; but what is your plot regarding him?"

"To have you capture us both, sir, for I will return, and then you can decide what are best,

for I think it can be made to pan out big, cap'n."

And so it was decided, and successfully carried through, as has been seen.

After having blindfolded Edgar Dumont, the bandage was removed from the eyes of Texas, and while in camp he kept near the chief's quarters so as not to be put in irons.

The talk between Captain Brandt and his spy, resulted in the plot to get a ransom from the alleged uncle of the young detective, for it must be remembered that the guide believed implicitly in the story told by Edgar Dumont, about his being in search of one Charles Kennerley.

If the spy had made up his mind to work for his own interest, rather than for those of the band, he decided, as he still might be under watch, to play fair with the chief until he could act without dread of detection.

So he suggested to the chief a plan which the next chapter will reveal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CHIEF AT HOME.

AFTER returning to his quarters, the chief of the Black Bravos conned over the plot he had entered into with the spy known as Texas, and which the latter had suggested.

He paced to and fro, his mask thrown aside, and his face lost in deep meditation.

The truth must be told that Captain Brandt was a lover of gold to an enormous degree.

He had gone into robberies on the trails to accumulate a certain sum, which he had put down in his mind as a limit for his riches.

His robberies on the Texan trails, by raids into Mexico, and in stopping trains and travelers, had now gotten for him that sum.

He had deposited his gold in banks, and unwilling to check his crime-earnings while they came in liberally, had set another sum at which he would call a halt, and seek other fields to enjoy his wealth.

That other sum was well-nigh reached when he made his visit to Colonel Dillon Dumont at his ranch of Ranger's Rest.

He had known of his rival, as he believed, his successful rival, dwelling in Texas for a long while, and, in fact, he and his Black Bravos had found him their worst foe.

So he had decided upon revenge, and fearful had been his vengeance.

Then, with the booty and cattle and horses stolen from his old rival, he had reaped a golden harvest, surpassing his second limit of riches, for he had found ready buyers for all the plunder through agents in Texas, Mexico and New Mexico.

Still the man was not content, and a third limit to his riches was set.

He well knew that with the death of Colonel Dumont, the Ranger commander, Texas would be too hot for him, so he decided to make a new field in Colorado.

Thither he went, and at once began to terrorize the mining-camps.

He found the mines and the Overland stage trails most fruitful picking, and he was certain of now reaching his third limit in wealth.

Then he would go to the East and seek out Kate Kennerley, the woman he had never ceased to love, and if she was still single, make her his wife.

If she was married, it would be easy enough to make a widow of her, and then to marry her.

He was still a splendid-looking man, and though verging along over forty-five, yet hardly appeared to have lived two-score years.

He could readily pay up little debts due when he had departed, with full interest, arrange the forgery matter, and thus wipe out the stain upon his record, while he had always felt that at heart Kate Kennerley had really loved him.

So it was that Captain Brandt, as he had called himself, went to Colorado to reach the third limit he had set as his wealth extreme.

He was nearing the limit when Edgar Dumont became his prisoner, and it was well for the young Texan that the outlaw chief did not know him as the son of Dillon Dumont, and especially that he was a detective tracking him to earth.

Musing aloud as he paced to and fro, the Black Bravo said:

"It is a good scheme of Bricks to try and find out the mine of this boy's uncle, and thus get possession of the old man's earnings, and his best way is to use the boy as a tool."

"If the man paid the ransom for the boy it would be but five thousand, while we may get ten times as much by finding the mine and getting possession of it."

"It is worth the trial at any rate, and the

boy will be well used in helping us get possession."

"Then I can give up this life and going East become a respected member of society."

"Well, I must hit the stages and miners until Bricks returns, and I will also see if I cannot make that landlord, Jim Patrick, suffer, for somehow I feel he is the worst enemy the Black Bravos have."

"He's too honest a fellow for a landlord of a miners' hotel, as I discovered when I hinted to him to become the spy for the Bravos."

The chief now stopped his musing and entering his shelter sat down to his table and began to figure up his profit, a work he seemed to greatly enjoy, for at heart the man was a perfect miser.

Soon after his negro servant came in to set the table for supper, and it would have surprised the denizens of civilization to see how well the chief of the Black Bravos fared there in his wild mountain retreat.

The shades of night soon after shrouded the mountain-top in gloom, and the camp-fires began to burn low, for the outlaws retired early to rest, as the chief had ordered all in readiness at dawn for an expedition to some of the unprotected mining-camps.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SPY'S PLOT.

EDGAR DUMONT went to sleep that night with his brain full of suspicion against the guide.

He felt confident that he was in league, in some way, with the chief of the Black Bravos.

How long he had slept he did not know; but he was awakened by feeling a presence near him.

The camp was dark, and all was as silent as the grave.

He half rose and listened, while his eyes tried to penetrate the darkness.

The tree to which he was chained grew on the edge of the ridge, and the nearest of the camps of outlaws to him was some hundred feet away.

Chained as he was there was no chance in the minds of the Bravos, of his being able to escape.

Suddenly he saw a dark form near him, and in a whisper came the words:

"Be still, boy pard."

It was the guide, and the next moment he was by the side of the youth.

"Texas, you here?"

"Yas, pard, they let me go on ther hunt fer yer uncle, and I come back right on ther track o' ther feller as tarned me loose, and here I is."

"But why?"

"Ter set yer free."

"But this chain is around the tree and my ankle as well."

"I knows that."

"Then how can you help me?"

"I has a file."

"A file?"

"Yas, boy pard."

The youth said nothing, and the guide ran his hands over the links of chain around the ankle of the prisoner.

One link seemed to suit him as best to begin on, and he at once set to work.

The grating sound would hardly reach the ears of the outlaws if awake, and the guide stuck steadily to his work.

It took over an hour, an occasional word being said in a whisper between the two, and then Texas said:

"It are did."

"I am free?"

"Yas, see thar," and he pulled the other link loose from the one he had filed through at the end.

"Now git yer traps, and let me go for yer weepens, for they put 'em right yonder," and he pointed to a tree not far distant.

Edgar Dumont said nothing, and the guide crept away in the darkness.

He soon returned with the belt of arms and the rifle of the youth, and found that the rescued prisoner had rolled up his blankets and gotten his traps together, so was ready to start.

"Which way now?"

"To whar ther horses is staked out."

"Do you mean that I can get my horse?"

"Yes."

"But he will be heard."

"No, we'll muffle his huffs."

"But the guard?"

"He won't trouble nobody no more."

"What! did you kill him?"

"Waal, I should say I did, boy pard."

"But you said you crept up the other side of the ridge?"

"Yer misunderstood me, for I said I could hev come thet way."

"Ah!"
 "Is yer ready?"
 "I am."

The guide led the way, creeping off in the darkness, and Edgar Dumont followed silently. The guide seemed to be strangely familiar with the top of the ridge, and especially with the spot where the horse of the youth was staked out; but the detective made no comment and followed in silence.

The animal gave a low neigh, as his young master approached, and he was quickly saddled, bridled and his hoofs muffled, for a piece of old blanket and the saddle and bridle were conveniently near.

The guide still led the way, and they soon reached the spot where the guide was wont to be on duty.

There was a man there; but he lay prostrate upon the ground.

This fact again caused the young detective to fear, after all, that he had wronged his guide.

But he followed in silence, his horse following and shying at the sight of the prostrate form.

Half a mile down the canyon they came to where the guide had left his horse, and mounting they set off at as fast a pace as they dared venture upon.

The guide led the way, Edgar Dumont following in silence, and miles were gone over before a word was uttered by either.

Then Texas came to a halt and said:

"Pard, yer is rescood."

"Yes, I owe it to you, Texas, and you know I am grateful."

"You accomplished it well; but which way now?"

"I guess we will just look to our safety, and then kinder keep up ther hunt fer ther uncle."

"Ah, yes."

Edgar Dumont said no more, but his thoughts were busy.

The words of the guide caused him to think that he was most anxious to find that alleged uncle.

Putting this and that together, the young detective came to the conclusion that to find the supposed Charles Kennerley was a greater cause of anxiety to his guide than to himself.

After camping for a couple of hours' rest they resumed their way, and the detective observed that the guide seemed not to have the slightest dread of being pursued by the Black Bravos.

It was one hour before dawn before they camped for the rest of the night.

They went to rest, Texas telling Edgar that there was no need of keeping a watch.

The youth was satisfied and sunk to sleep.

He had not the slightest dread now of his guide, or, at least, just then.

He knew that the guide wished him to live, and more, he found him valuable.

So he slept serenely until the sun was well up in the skies.

With good grass and water and rest, the horses were ready for the journey once more, and after breakfast, for the guide was well supplied with provisions, they again set off.

"Now, where first?" asked Edgar.

"Waal, maybe we had better go to the Silver Canyon Camps first."

"Why not to Gold Dust City?"

"Waal, it are a good place ter luk, but we'll come back ther-away."

"If we get there by Friday we'll see the hangin', you know."

"Yas, but I has seen hangin's; but when did yer hear o' thet hangin', boy pard?"

"From parties I met before I reached the camp where I met you."

"They said he were a Black Bravo?"

"It was suspected that he was."

"He might be, so let us go to Gold Dust City and see him hanged," urged Edgar Dumont.

"No, we'll come around thet-away, and go ter Silver Canyon Camps first, then the Eagle Peak Mines, and so on."

"You thought you knew just where my uncle could be found?"

"So I does; but men moves round curious like in these mines, and it's well ter go thro' and try each camp, though I are pretty sart'in whar I'll find Charlie."

"Where do you think?"

"At Gold Dust, I guesses; but we comes by thar last."

"We will not—we go to Gold Dust City now," was the reply that startled the guide.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DETECTIVE WINS.

IN spite of his having been winding around the mountains with his guide, and his capture

by the Black Bravos, Edgar Dumont had been studying geography.

That is, he had been impressing upon his mind distance and locality.

When he had escaped from the retreat of the outlaws, though he had said nothing about it, he had observed that the guide did not take the trail they had been on before their capture.

Silver Canyon had been the point they were first to strike, the guide had said, in their search, and yet, where they were, as he now said, going first there, Texas had taken an opposite direction, as though he thought the detective, ignorant in a measure of the border, would not notice it.

But Edgar Dumont was deceiving the guide even more cleverly than Texas supposed he was deceiving the one to whom he pretended to be a friend.

Having become convinced that the guide was treacherous, the detective determined to act, and act promptly.

He was sure he was within a day's ride of the retreat of the Rocky Mountain Detectives, for he had recognized a rocky ridge and brook he had passed the day before he had saved the life of General Dave Cook.

If he wronged the guide he would make all right at another time; but it was best to be on the safe side, and so he acted in self-defense.

When he had said that they would go to Gold Dust City first, he had emphasized the words by leveling his revolver full in the face of the guide.

Texas was amazed.

His face wore a doubting, peculiar expression.

"Why, boy pard, is yer clean gone mad?" he asked.

"No, I am in my right senses, Texas, as you shall see."

"Up with your hands, or I will send a bullet through your brain."

"But, pard—"

"Hands up, sir!"

There was no mistaking the words, no mistaking the look in the eyes of the young detective.

"Pard, I—"

"By Heaven, I swear I'll pull trigger if you hesitate!"

Up went the hands, for the young detective's revolver was cocked, the finger on the trigger, and the muzzle but a few inches from the eyes of the desperado.

Coolly yet quickly the youth took the revolvers and knife of the guide away from him, and then unslung his rifle from his back.

Dismounting then, he took the lariat of the guide, and securely bound him to his saddle.

There was not a word spoken now, but the face of the guide was livid.

He could not exactly comprehend it all.

The one he had deemed a "tenderfoot," had suddenly proven himself his match.

What did the young man know?

What did he suspect?

Was he really what he had represented himself?

It began to dawn upon the mind of the desperado that he was not.

But what did it all mean, and how would it all end, were the two questions that worried him immensely.

Having taken possession of the weapons of the guide, and tied him fast to his saddle, Edgar Dumont remounted, and with the bridle-rein of his prisoner in hand started on his way.

"Whar is yer going?" suddenly asked the desperado.

"You will know in good time."

"This hain't ther trail ter Gold Dust that yer is follerin'?"

"I know that."

"What does yer know about it?"

"I have changed my mind, for I am not going to Gold Dust just now."

"You hain't?"

"No."

"How does yer know?"

"I am somewhat acquainted with this trail."

"Durnation! I is afeerd yer hain't ther fool I tuk yer fer."

Edgar Dumont laughed, and the desperado resumed.

"Waal, ef yer go ter Gold Dust I'll give yer a p'inter."

"What about?"

"Has yer ever heerd tell o' Bill Curran?"

"Yes, as one of the worst desperadoes in Texas."

"Waal, he'll be at Gold Dust City at the hangin'."

"How do you know?"

"He told me so."

"You know him then?"

"Yas, I has met him."

"What kind of a looking man is he?"

"He's a big man, with one eye, for t'other was shot out; but the one he has are a good one."

"He hev a bullet mark in his cheek too, and has lost two fingers o' his left hand."

"Oh, he's been cut up, he has, and as thar is a big reward fer him, I'll go shares if yer'll let me go and you run him in."

"Thank you; but, after your description of him I cannot fail to recognize him, so I'll be on hand to capture him on the day of the hanging, and in the mean time I'll take you to where you will be safe."

"Curses on yer," growled the desperado, who began to feel that he was no match for the quiet youth he had expected to make big money out of and whom he thought he had so surely in his power.

Edgar Dumont fully realized all the danger he ran.

At any time he might come upon some of the Black Bravos, and his position would be changed to that of the guide, for he was now certain that Texas was recently one of the outlaw band, and his reference to Bill Curran the desperado convinced him the more.

Then, too, he was certain that he had not made a mistake in having seen the guide in Texas.

But the young Dare-Devil Detective was equal to the situation he found himself in, and was determined to take his prisoner to the camp of General Cook at all hazards.

Texas fretted savagely under his imprisonment, appealing almost piteously at times for his freedom, then demanding it, and again making terrible threats what he would do to the detective once he got away.

But Edgar rode calmly upon his way, now following the trail he had been on before, in his search for the camp of the Rocky Mountain Men the day he saved the life of their chief.

He halted at the very rock for a rest, behind which the two men had ambuscaded themselves, and then pressed on once more for the camp.

"Whar is yer goin', boy pard?" asked Texas, in a cheerful tone, after having remained silent for over an hour.

"To Dave Cook's camp."

"Oh, Lord!"

"You know him, then?"

"Waal I does, and he are ther wu'st terror in these parts and don't you forgit it."

"A terror to outlaws, you mean, and for that reason you fear him."

"I hain't no outlaw, pard."

"You shave it pretty close, Texas, for I know you."

"Who is yer?"

"Did you ever hear of Colonel Dillon Dumont, the Texan Ranger?"

As Edgar spoke he fixed his eyes firmly upon the face of the man.

He saw him start and pale, and quickly lower his eyes.

"No, I don't know him."

"And yet you are from Texas."

"Who says so?"

"I do, for I know you, Brute Benton, as one of my father's cowboys who skipped off with a dozen ponies one night two years ago."

"I have tried to recall your face, and have at last done so, and more, you killed one of the men who pursued you."

"I know you, Brute Benton, and that your name of Brute was given you on account of your inhuman acts toward cattle."

"I hain't ther man yer takes me fer."

"Oh, yes, you are, and you remember me now; but not expecting me to be here, and not wearing long hair now, while two years have changed me greatly, you did not recall me."

"But you do now, Brute Benton, and as you are one of the Black Bravo band, you were with them when they murdered my father and burned my home."

"It are a lie, fer I wasn't with 'em that time."

"Ah! you as much as admit that you are with them, and, if the truth was known, I believe you are the one who led them there."

"But we are near camp now, and I will see what General Cook has to say about you," and half an hour after the young detective and his prisoner entered the camp of the Secret Service Men.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DETECTIVE STRIKES ANOTHER BLOW.

GENERAL DAVE COOK was at his quarters when he saw the Dare-Devil Detective ride into the camp.

Edgar Dumont, knowing the secret signs of

the detectives, upon approaching the camp, had given them to the concealed sentinel without attracting the attention of the prisoner.

He rode up to the quarters of the general, who called out:

"Back so soon, Edgar?"

"Lordy! you is a detective yerself, and I are a durned fool clean through," growled the prisoner.

"Yes, chief, I bagged some game, so brought it to camp."

"Who is he?"

"He answers to the name of Texas in Golden Gulch, and is also known as Satan's Cub."

"Ah, yes, I know of him, and some of my boys doubtless know him."

"But what do you make him out?"

"A secret member of the Black Bravo band."

"It are a lie, fer I hain't."

"Well, he is valuable, for we can find out what we wish to know about them," said the general.

"I can tell you what you wish to know, general," said the young Texan with a smile, and he turned over his treacherous guide to the two men whom the chief had called to take him in charge.

Then he sat down at the quarters of the chief, and told him all that had occurred.

General Cook grasped the hand of the youth and said warmly:

"You are a perfect dare-devil, Edgar, and will be my best man before long."

"But can you lead us to the camp of the Bravos?"

"Yes, sir, without doubt."

"How many are there?"

"I should think they range about a score in camp at one time; but there are others out on duty all the time."

"Well, if we strike at the fountain-head, and catch the leader, then we can run the others to earth afterward."

"Now let us prepare to go just as soon as I can call in my men from their duty in the camps."

"We can wait until after the hanging, sir, for I can capture this Bill Curran that day, and you know the Bravos think that Texas is with me searching for my uncle," and the youth laughed heartily.

"True, and we will wait, while you attend the hanging at Gold Dust; but there may be some of the Black Bravos there and recognize you."

"I had thought of that, sir, so wished to ask you about a disguise."

"I can rig you out finely, for in addition to my own traps, I have the entire outfit of a traveling show company that fell into my hands by my advancing money on it, for the players to go home."

"There are wigs there and all you wish."

The next morning the youth rode out of camp dressed as a soldier, and wearing a blonde wig and otherwise disguised.

He knew that the Bravos had seen so little of him that he would pass muster very well, and as two other of the detectives went with him, he had no fear of detection, for these two men were attired as soldiers, Edgar wearing the uniform of a junior lieutenant.

Their destination was Gold Dust City, and they planned to arrive there on Friday, the day set for the hanging of Lucky Jim, when the young detective determined to arrest Bill Curran, the scarred desperado and any other of the Texans he might recognize, for he was sure that he would find that they had been with Brandt the Bravo in the attack upon his home.

The news that there was to be a hanging at Gold Dust City had filled the town, miners coming from camps a day's ride away.

An ordinary lynching could not draw such a crowd as it would be upon the spur of the moment.

But to have a man hanged by the law, under the sentence of Buck Baldwin, landlord, postmaster, storekeeper, and last, but by no means least, justice of the peace, was something the miners felt that they must see.

Then, too, Lucky Jim was known to be a desperado of the worst type, and the miners wished to see how he would step off into eternity.

The morning of the hanging broke clear and pleasant, and Gold Dust awoke to find itself crowded.

The place was full of strangers, and the Palace Hotel and store belonging to "Judge" Baldwin did a tremendous business, while the bar was crowded so that it was almost impossible to get into it.

"Judge Buck," as his intimates called him, was in his element, and what between his se-

riousness as a judge, and his delight at the harvest of gold-dust he was reaping, it was hard for him to blend his happiness and sternness into one expression.

There were Black Bravos there, and all knew it; but, without their black suits and masks who could tell them?

Then there were Rocky Mountain Detectives there also; but no one could pick them out, and to many of the crowd this was a deep regret, for they cast a damper upon the proceedings, the more because they were unknown.

Into Gold Dust City there rode three soldiers and put up at the Palace Hotel.

The judge found them quarters, and they stuck close to their room; but why the young lieutenant and his men had come no one could guess, and their presence created an uneasy feeling in many hearts, for why had they left the fort but to return with a prisoner, was the general decision.

At last "court" was called upon the piazza of the hotel.

The crowd assembled about, to get a good view, and the judge took his seat before a dry-goods box, his feet being in the box, and placed there too were a couple of repeating rifles and several revolvers within easy reach of the hands of justice.

Landlord Jim Patrick, from Golden Gulch, had been invited to a seat by Judge Baldwin, upon the principle that a "fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind," for they were in the same business.

Behind the judges stood a number of the employees of the hotel, and they all had their guns ready for business, while, if any one noticed particularly, the cunning limb of the law had other backers stationed at the front windows of the house, to be on hand if needed.

Lucky Jim had been sent over by General Cook, and two of the Rocky Mountain Detectives who sought no disguise had the prisoner in charge, and, at a call from the judge brought him out upon the piazza.

The prisoner was as white as a corpse, and glanced over the crowd as though seeking for sympathy.

"Prisoner, you are called Lucky Jim," said the court, sternly.

"I are."

"Well, I have a number of charges, and they can be proven without witnesses, so we won't waste the time of the court by calling for proofs, but at once proceed to business."

"You have been twice sentenced to death before, but escaped, and in escaping have taken human life."

"I have here a letter from General Dave Cook telling me that you are the right man, and with his list of charges against you, and asking me to hang you in the name of the law, and I am only sorry I have not more of your stripe to swing off with you."

"I'll give you another to hang, judge," cried a voice in the crowd.

The speaker was the Dare-Devil Detective, who, as he uttered the words, leveled a revolver at the head of a huge desperado who stood by his side.

CHAPTER XXII.

AT THE ROPE'S END.

THE words of the young officer, as Edgar Dumont was supposed to be, fell with startling effect upon the crowd.

Especially did it startle the man of whom he spoke.

That man was a burly ruffian with one eye, a scarred face, several fingers missing from his left hand, and the look of one who was at war with his kind.

He was the terror of all who knew him, and in watching the proceedings that were to end in the hanging of a human being he seemed to take positive delight.

As Edgar Dumont, disguised as an army officer, uttered the words, he stood by the side of the ruffian, and instantly had his cocked revolver in the face of the man.

The desperado was fairly caught.

He had his weapons ready, but his hand was not upon them, and so he determined to brave it out.

"What ails you, sojer?" he cried, in a voice of thunder.

"Hands up! quick!"

The response was threatening, and he obeyed, but with a growl like a grizzly bear at bay.

"Here, Saunders, take this man's weapons, and you, Knox, put the irons upon him."

Edgar turned to the two men who were dressed as soldiers, and who stood near.

They obeyed with an alacrity that was surprising.

"Search him, Knox."

This order was obeyed, and the things found upon him, with his weapons, were placed upon the dry-goods box that served as a desk to the judge.

Then Edgar Dumont went upon the piazza with his prisoner, the crowd giving way for him, for, reckless as they were, no one cared to oppose the military.

"Judge, this man is Bill Curran, horse-thief, raider, murderer and Black Bravo all in one."

"He is outlawed in Texas, and I know there was a price on his head there."

"I turn him over to you as a sentenced fugitive from justice, so you have him to hang along with that man, Lucky Jim."

"Oh, Lordy!" groaned Bill Curran, crushed and cowed by having been so quickly and cleverly caught.

"I know the man, sir, and I can vouch for his being a terror; but give me your name to substantiate your charge, and if satisfactory I'll hang him," said Judge Baldwin.

"Yes, we'll hang him ef we has ter try ther case arterwards," chimed in Landlord Jim Patrick, feeling that he was associate judge for the occasion.

The young Texan stepped forward and handed the judge a slip of paper, which had a few lines written upon it.

He glanced at the supposed soldier and read again, but in a low tone to Jim Patrick.

It was as follows:

"The bearer of this is on special duty for me, so obey his bidding."

"DAVE COOK,

"Chief Rocky Mountain Secret Service Men."

There was the official stamp upon it also of the chief, and believing that the bearer was also an army officer, Judge Buck Baldwin said aloud:

"I am satisfied, sir, and will make it a double hanging, for it is just such men as these are that we must rid the mines of."

Bill Curran swore loudly at the youth and the judge, and Lucky Jim chimed in to help him out, though glad of company in his desperate situation.

"I charge both of these men of being secret members of the band of outlaws known as the Black Bravos," said Edgar Dumont.

"Can any one else substantiate this charge?" asked the judge, who was anxious to have justice wholly on his side.

There was a movement of the crowd and an old gray-haired man came forward, his body bent, his steps tottering, though he carried a stout cane.

"I know them as Black Bravos," said the old man in a feeble voice.

"Who are you, old pard?" asked the judge.

The miner bent over and whispered.

"Don't start at what I tell you; but I am Dave Cook, Chief of the Rocky Mountain Men."

"Ah! that is all right, and I need no other proof," and the judge turned to the prisoners and continued:

"Bill Curran, and you, Lucky Jim, let me tell you that you have got to die, and I give you but ten minutes to ask pardon of Heaven for your crimes, though I am doubtful about your getting your prayers granted."

"Nick Rawlings, you are to guard the prisoners until they quit life, and you, Ben Price, rig another rope over the beam yonder," and the judge pointed to a beam that had been placed from the shed of the piazza to a tree near, and over which hung a rope with a noose in the end.

The two prisoners cursed savagely, instead of praying, and Ben Price soon had a second rope ready.

Then the dry-goods box was made to do duty as a scaffold, and the two men were ordered to mount upon it.

They obeyed, though with bitter oaths, and the judge, acting as executioner, placed the noose over their necks.

The other ends of the rope were then thrown out into the crowd, and Judge Buck said:

"Pards, give us a hand, and when I say swing 'em off, pull with a will."

A shout greeted this, for it was as though the judge had taken them into his confidence, and they were to have a hand in the hanging.

"Now, pards! All together—swing 'em up!"

The crowd obeyed as the dry-goods box was dragged from beneath the two doomed men, and their forms swung out over the heads of the motley gang, swaying to and fro, and with the fearful spectacle fairly enjoyed by fully one-half who were present.

CHAPTER XXIII.
THE MIDNIGHT RAID.

It was several days before all the strangers left Gold Dust City for their respective haunts, for the double hanging, "by process of law," was used as a foundation for a general orgie, and the result was that the cemetery in the glen near by was the richer by half a dozen more graves of men who had "died with their boots on."

Even Edgar Dumont had not known the detective chief, in his old man's disguise, until he came up and spoke to him, and said:

"I see no others present to arrest, Edgar, so we will return to camp, and arrange for our raid upon the Black Bravos, as I fear they may change their retreat."

"Why, chief, I never would have known you; but I am ready, though I will go off with my two men and wait for you on the trail."

This was done, and Edgar was surprised to find when the chief came up with him that he had a dozen of his men with him, all disguised as miners, so that Secret Service Men were well represented at the double hanging.

Arriving in their camp, the detectives at once began preparations for the march against the Black Bravos' stronghold.

The best horses were picked out, provisions were gotten ready, the ammunition pouches were filled and the weapons all put in the very best condition.

The second night after the return Chief Cook and his detectives rode out of camp.

Edgar Dumont was acting as guide, and the whole force of the Secret Service Band was along, consisting of some thirty men, all splendidly mounted and armed.

The camp had been broken up, so that four men followed with the pack-animals carrying the outfit, and they were to go to another retreat of the detectives and there wait for the return of their comrades from the expedition against the Black Bravos.

When dawn approached the detectives went into camp in a canyon, where they could remain in hiding.

Two men had been left back on the trail to see if they were pursued, and a watch was placed at the head of the canyon in advance, to give warning if any enemy approached that way.

The Texan Detective reported that they were but a couple of hours' ride of the ridge retreat of the Black Bravos, so that the men felt that they would have a long day's rest, for themselves and horses.

Just after dark the guards reported, and the party mounted and rode on to where there was a trail which the men with the pack-horses took to go to the other rendezvous.

The chief and his fighting men held on at a slow pace, Edgar Dumont riding by the side of the leader.

At last the canyon was reached where he and his guide had been taken prisoners by the Bravos, and from there on the detectives rode in single file.

The night was dark, for clouds obscured the stars, and when they began the ascent of the hill there was a halt called and the hoofs of the horses muffled for this had been already prepared for, as Edgar Dumont well knew that the ring of hoofs on the rocks would give warning of their coming half a mile away.

The noses of the horses were also muffled, and not anything that would ring out and give warning, was allowed to be worn.

As they neared the spot where the young Dare-Devil Detective knew the outlaw guard was on post, he rode on ahead and alone.

He dismounted and took off the mufflers from the hoofs of his horse, for one animal would not give alarm, he well knew.

The men were told to dismount and advance as near as possible, and then remove the mufflers from their horses' hoofs, to be ready to charge when Edgar gave the command.

He had told General Cook that the sentinel stood hardly a hundred yards from the camp, so that they could soon dash into the midst of it, and each man had been given a description of just how it was located by the young detective.

"I will see that the chief does not escape," he had said to the general.

So on he rode, until suddenly rung out clear and threatening:

"Halt!"

"Texas," replied the youth, still running forward, for he did not know the passwords that would show him to be a friend.

"Halt! I say."

The reply of the youth was not from his lips.

His revolver spoke for him, and at its ring the outlaw sentinel fell dead.

Dave Cook needed no call, for he dashed forward, followed by his men.

The shot had alarmed the camp, but they found the sentinel dead, and Edgar Dumont led the way directly into the outlaw encampment.

Aroused from slumber, and enraged that their camp had been invaded, the Black Bravos did not fully comprehend the situation until they began to fall under the fire of the detectives.

Then they fought back; but their whole force was not in camp, they were outnumbered, and in terror they sought to escape, some mounting the horses of several dismounted detectives, and others going over the steep mountain-side in the rear of the encampment.

Half a dozen fell under the hot fire of the detectives, and their days of outlawry were over, while others were wounded and taken prisoners, and a few escaped.

But the chief was not to be found, to the great disappointment of Edgar Dumont, and the prisoners said that he had not been in camp for several days.

The horses, weapons, and booty taken was found to be, when dawn broke, considerable, and Chief Cook and his detectives were loud in their praise of the Dare-Devil Detective who had so ably led them to victory.

The news spread like wild-fire through the mines that the Black Bravos had been annihilated by Cook's Secret Service Men, and the outlaws generally "lay low" for fear that the good work thus begun would be pushed against them also.

But Edgar Dumont was sadly disappointed at the result, as he had hoped to have captured Captain Brandt.

By promising one of the prisoners his freedom he learned considerable about Captain Brandt, and that he had been an old-time enemy of his father, and thus had sought him out through a desire for revenge for some act in the past.

Looking over the papers he had found at his home among the few things left, he had discovered a letter to his father from a man signing himself Gale Brandt Davenport.

This gave him a clew to go by, and his chief talked it all over with him, while the letter showed the name of the town where it was written, the date—many years before—and mentioned the name of others in it.

"I will go on that man's track, chief, and run him down, no matter where I may have to follow him," said Edgar Dumont, and a few days after he started upon the trail of the Black Bravo chief, whose description he had written down, as furnished by the outlaw prisoner, as also certain peculiarities about him.

He also found out from the prisoner, whom he kept his word to and set free, that Captain Brandt had been the one to kill his father, and so he started forth upon his trail determined to never leave it until he had brought the murderer to justice.

CHAPTER XXIV.
ON ANOTHER TRACK.

THE way that Edgar Dumont set about tracking Brandt the chief of the Black Bravos, was thoroughly systematic.

He would have given much to remain with Chief Cook, as he liked the man, and the life of danger and mystery led by the detectives; but he could not allow the murderer of his father to escape.

So he made himself a special detective to ferret out the hiding-place of his father's murderer.

He found out from the outlaw whom he set free, just where the chief had been at the time of the attack of the detectives upon the camp of the Black Bravos, and the kind of horse he rode and the equipments.

With this information he did not find it so very hard to follow him from place to place.

Frightened at the destruction of his band, Captain Brandt had been only anxious to escape from the country, and he had quickly started upon the back track for New Mexico.

He wished to make his way back into Texas, go to the towns as an honest citizen and getting his crime-stained riches, make his way to the North, where he hoped to be wholly beyond all detection and pursuit from those who thirsted for his life.

He got about ten days' start of his young pursuer, and of course it was by no means as easy a task for Edgar Dumont to follow the man as rapidly as he went along.

But he traced him well, went from camp to camp, and town to town in New Mexico, and

then discovered that, for some reason, he had gone across the Rio Grande into Mexico, and later developments showed that it was the fear of remaining in Texas that had caused the Black Bravo chief to do this.

Across the Rio Grande went the untiring Dare-Devil Detective, and upon the trail of his enemy he hung like a bloodhound.

As he went along he had to pay his way here and there, and also to pay for information given him, until he saw with regret that his purse was growing each day more diminished in value.

He had picked up considerable Spanish as a boy, so spoke it fairly well, and from this circumstance found no difficulty in making his way.

At length he arrived in Vera Cruz, still on the track of his enemy, and, to his deep chagrin, discovered that he had taken a vessel for New York only a few days before.

There was no doubt but that he was on the right track, for he had in his possession the specimen of the outlaw chief's writing, which he had written to his pretended uncle, and he had seen it on the books of a dozen taverns.

In Vera Cruz he found where the Black Bravo had registered in Mexico as Brandt Black, he had put himself down on the ship's books as "Gale B. Davenport, of Mexico."

This connected him surely with his father's old enemy, and Edgar Dumont felt that he had a mystery to solve that went back beyond his birth.

Selling his horses, but keeping his saddle, bridle and weapons, the Dare-Devil Detective took passage on the next vessel bound to New York, and at last arrived in the great metropolis.

But he was about at the end of his pocket-book, and knew not what to do in the big city.

Still, he was not one to give up, and his lucky star led him to take up his quarters in a fashionable hotel, and a strange destiny brought to him a piece of detective work that made him acquainted with Captain Jack Boland, the detective chief, an accidental discovery he had made of a crime committed in the hotel, and which he had traced to a successful termination.

He had almost despaired of finding the man he tracked, for he had lost his trail after arriving in New York, and was thinking of returning to Dave Cook to get money for a fresh start, when he had happened upon the Secret Service work which proved to be the foundation stone of future fortune and success.

Taking a great fancy to the young detective, when he had seen the remarkably clever manner in which he had tracked the mystery of a hotel robbery, Captain Jack Boland had asked him to join his league, and this the young Texan had done.

He had shown that he was not only an adept in tracing out border mysteries and following frontier trails, but was as true to a clew in the city, and had a brain and pluck peculiarly adapted for Secret Service work.

It was therefore, that when Captain Boland, the detective chief, was sent for to go to Wildlands, and consult with Mr. Thomas St. John, the merchant prince, and the beautiful governess, Cora Maynell, regarding the mystery of the two letters coming from the West, telling her of the gold mine left her by her father, that Edgar Dumont was the one selected to go to Colorado and ferret out the whole affair, and discover why the heiress had not heard again from the man who had signed himself B. Borden.

Captain Boland had spoken of his boy detective as the very one to go, understanding the West as he did, and so had telegraphed for him to come at once to Wildlands, where Mr. St. John, the governess and all were surprised to find in the young man so courtly a gentleman, and, as pretty Allene St. John said, "one so exceedingly handsome and fascinating."

Armed with full instructions, and authority to act, Edgar Dumont started for Colorado, upon the trail of the Maynell-Delorme Maynell mystery, and to ferret out the full merits and demerits of the case.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE OVERLAND.

OVER an Overland Trail, running through Colorado, and the end of which was Gold Dust City, the mining camp already well known to the reader, a stage-coach was rolling along.

Driving rapidly when the trail permitted, and slow at the hills and bad places, the driver, Josh Sloan, was entertaining a passenger with

stories of wild adventure on the Overland coaches.

The passenger was in fact the only one he had and sat upon the box with Josh Sloan.

He seemed to be deeply interested in all that Josh said, and asked a hundred questions about various people in the mining country.

"Does yer see that big pile o' rocks yonder, pard?" asked the driver as they came upon the ridge and he pointed ahead a few hundred yards.

"Yes."

"Waal, that were a favorite place fer ther Black Bravos to hold up ther coach, and right in back under ther pines thar be now a half a dozen graves o' people as was kilt in ther scrimmages right thar."

"The Black Bravos have been broken up, I heard."

"Waal, Dave Cook and his detectives did break up ther band; but thar are a few of 'em as didn't git nabbed and they is prancin' round pickin' up a leetle dust whar they kin find it; but it are sarti'n they hasn't troubled my trail since they got bu'sted up."

"And their chief, what of him?"

"Waal, some say as how he were kilt, and others say he escaped ther night ther detectives struck 'em, and are now minin' fer a livin'; but I kinder think he lighted out from the diggin's long ago, as it were uncommon unhealthy fer him hereabout."

The passenger smiled but made no reply, and kept his eyes upon the pile of rocks referred to by the driver.

Suddenly there sprung out, as if by magic half a dozen forms, and a voice shouted sternly: "You are held up, halt!"

The driver hesitated, but not so the passenger, for seizing the whip he lashed the horses with one hand while with the other he fired upon the road-agents.

One fell dead, another wounded, and so surprised were they, so taken aback by the bold act, that the coach was passing through the line before they rallied.

Then they fired and the driver uttered a sharp cry.

He had been wounded in the arm by a bullet.

But instantly the passenger seized the reins, and laid the whip on, while he called out:

"Let them have it with your pistol."

Thus urged, with his unharmed hand, Josh Sloan fired rapidly at the pursuing road-agents, while the horses sped on, the new driver holding the animals well down to work and going at a tremendous pace.

The coach thus rolled on, to safety ere the astonished outlaws could realize that it had escaped them.

They swore loud and deep as they saw pursuit was useless, and were forced to give up the chase.

On flew the horses, and the daring driver handled the reins like an expert, while Josh Sloan moved his wounded arm.

"I say, pard, whar did yer l'arn ter handle ther ribbons?" he cried, in admiration.

"In Texas."

"Durnation! but you learnt to ther Queen's taste, pard; but ther feller with ther white slouch got me, didn't he?"

"I hope your wound will not prove a severe one; but we dare not stop yet to look at it."

"Not fer me, so keep 'em going, as thar is considerable freight aboard this old hearse them fellers would like ter git, pard."

"Pears ter me I has seen yer afore, somewhere."

"Maybe so."

"You don't look like a man o' ther plains, but yer acts it, fer yer is chain-lightnin' on ther shoot and drive."

"Yer laid one out, and t'other you shot at went down with a bullet in him."

"I tell yer ther boys will be proud ter know yer at Gold Dust City, and Judge Buck Baldwin, ther landlord o' ther Palace Hotel will be pleased ter make yer comfortable."

"What might be your name?"

"Edgar Dumont."

"Waal, that are a pretty handle and no mistake."

"Why, it sounds like a poetry name as yer read about in books."

The young detective laughed, and as they saw that the road-agents had not mounted and given chase, as they feared, he drew rein and looked at the wounded arm of the driver.

The bone was not broken, fortunately, and after looking to it as well as he could under the circumstances, he again drove on and soon after arrived at Gold Dust City.

There was great excitement there when the

stage rolled up and the loungers understood that road-agents were again on the Overland Trails.

The story of the attack was told by Josh Sloan in glowing colors, and Edgar Dumont became a young hero at once.

If Judge Buck felt that he had seen the young detective before, he could not tell where; but he gave him the best accommodations the Palace Hotel could afford, and aided him in fitting himself with a horse and outfit to take the trail, as also giving him all the information in his power about the finding of the unknown correspondent of Cora Maynell, the beautiful governess of Allene St. John.

Having gotten a clew as to a lonely miner dwelling a long way off from Gold Dust City, the daring young detective started off on his search, determined to know no such word as fail, for he felt that his pride was at stake to accomplish the purpose of his coming, and then too the beautiful eyes of Allene St. John had haunted him ever since he had seen the fair young girl at Wildlands.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DETECTIVE'S LETTER.

AFTER the departure of the young detective upon his perilous and difficult task of finding Cora Maynell's unknown correspondent who signed himself B. Borden, matters went on at Wildlands in the even tenor of their way until it began to be time to hear of the success or failure of Edgar Dumont's mission.

Not only had Mr. St. John felt assured, from what he had seen of the young Texan, and Captain Jack Boland had told him, that he would carry out his enterprise to a successful termination, but the governor also seemed to express the same confidence in his ability to do so, while in Allene he had a firm believer.

In truth, little Miss Allene had been quite smitten with the handsome young Texan in the day and night he had passed at Wildlands, and in her eyes he was a hero of no ordinary kind.

Captain Jack Boland had sketched his career to the merchant, as he knew it, and he had the sympathy and respect of all at Wildlands, and their prayers for his success and protection from harm.

One day, some time after the departure of Edgar Dumont, and when all were getting most anxious about the young detective, as no word came from him, a letter was brought up from the city by Mr. St. John for Miss Maynell.

They all went into the library to hear the contents, for the post-mark on the envelope was

"GOLD DUST CITY, COLORADO."

Breaking the seal with trembling hands, Cora Maynell saw that the handwriting was characteristic and distinct, and she read it aloud, as follows:

"MOUNTAIN CAMP, Colorado."

"MISS CORA MAYNELL:—

"DEAR LADY:—I have the pleasure of communicating to you on this, my first opportunity to do so, that I was successful in finding the Maynell-Delorme Mine after some little difficulty."

"I found in possession of it your correspondent, B. Borden, and one other, a Mr. Roy Rockford, also a miner."

"The reason that you have not again heard from Mr. Borden is that soon after his last letter he was fortunate enough to save the life of Mr. Rockford, who had been fired upon by an ambushed foe, and bringing him to his camp, near the mine, he discovered that he was not seriously hurt."

"In turn, soon after, as Mr. Borden was preparing to go to Gold Dust City after his mail, and to send you another letter, he was also wounded by a bullet from ambush, but his intended assassin was killed by Mr. Rockford in turn."

"Mr. Borden lay between life and death a long while, tenderly cared for by Mr. Rockford, and you can understand the reason why you did not hear from him."

"He is even now hardly able to travel, but soon will be, and we will start East, leaving Mr. Rockford in charge of the mine."

"That there is a mystery about the mine is certain, for it seems to be haunted by an evil genius, as your father lost his life as its owner, and one Leonard Delorme also was killed, and gave it over to Mr. Borden, who in turn was fired upon and nearly lost his life."

"The mine, which is, in fact, no regular gold-lead, but a canyon studded with dust and findings, has paid well, and still will pan out well for some little time."

"Mr. Rockford will be left in charge, as I said, while Mr. Borden comes East with me, bringing with him your share of the mine to date, and which is quite a handsome sum."

"Now permit me to beg pardon if I touch upon a

delicate theme, but I do so in the hope that I may bring happiness to you and one other."

"In conversation with Mr. B. Borden one night, I happened to speak of you as unmarried, when he said that you had married your cousin by the same name."

"I knew this to be a mistake, from what Captain Boland told me, as he was aware that Mr. Maynell, your cousin, had committed suicide just before the marriage hour."

"Captain Boland was also aware that you had consented to sacrifice yourself by marrying your cousin, to save your father from financial ruin, as he happened to be on the case to get Mr. Maynell's record."

"Aware of these circumstances, and knowing Mr. B. Borden as late an officer in the United States Army, and whose name is Captain Branch Borden, I make bold to write you as I do, for the fact of your having been engaged to him is known to me, and he, upon the breaking of that engagement, gave up the life of a soldier, and secluded himself here upon the border."

"When the mine fell into his hands he recognized at once that you were the heiress, and, believing you to be married, and not desiring to have you know him as he is, he signed his name to the letter written to you as B. Borden."

"I have urged Captain Borden to return East with me, and he can better explain to you all matters regarding your inheritance, so you may look for us at a date not very far distant."

"With the hope that my mission has been satisfactory, and kind remembrances to Mr. St. John and family, I remain,

Respectfully,

"EDGAR DUMONT, Detective."

"P. S.—I would like to add that Captain Borden, though aware that I am writing you regarding the mine, does not know the liberty I have taken in regard to himself, and to write you as I have."

When Cora Maynell reached the part of the letter that referred to Branch Borden, her old lover, her face had flushed and paled by turns, and she had stopped reading for awhile.

But after controlling her emotion she said:

"I have now nothing to conceal from you, my kind friends, so I will read just what Detective Dumont has written, and which I have glanced over."

"I may say that I did offer to sacrifice myself to save my father from financial wreck, and broke my engagement with Captain Branch Borden, the gentleman to whom Detective Dumont refers, to do so."

"But my cousin shot himself before the marriage, having squandered his fortune and committed crime to hide it, believing he would get a fortune with my hand."

"The papers had it that we were married, and Captain Borden doubtless saw the notice, for I heard that he had sailed for Europe."

"Instead, he went to the far West, and how strange a coincidence that we should cross each other's way in life again, and under such strange circumstances, is it not?"

Such was the explanation of the governess, and the mystery of her life being thus known, she became dearer than ever to Mr. St. John and his family, the noble merchant saying:

"I shall have to adopt you as my daughter, Cora, for I see that you will need a father, at least until you get another protector."

From that day all at Wildlands watched for the coming back of Edgar Dumont and with him the soldier lover of the beautiful governess.

Before that eventful day arrived both Edgar Dumont and Captain Borden had many adventures and perils to pass through; but the Dare-Devil Detective kept his word at last and in the end brought the soldier to Wildlands, and the reception they met with will never be obliterated from the memory of either of them, for the characters of my story, kind reader, are real ones and are to-day dwelling in the sunny South; but not as old bachelors, I assure you, as the soldier miner in the end won the one woman in the world to him, and it can be readily understood that Allene St. John became Mrs. Edgar Dumont, the bride of the Dare-Devil Detective.

THE END.

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers,
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